EQUIPPING PASTORS AND CHURCH LEADERS TO LAUNCH CONGREGATION-WIDE PRAYER SEEKING GOD'S NEW POSSIBILITIES

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING PASTORS AND CHURCH LEADERS TO LAUNCH
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GOD'S NEW POSSIBILITIES

by
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United Theological Seminary offers no optional training to equip students to launch and fuel congregation-wide prayer to corporately discern God's divine guidance and new possibilities. If a "Breakthrough Prayer Initiative" training were completed and implemented by a pastor and key church leaders, their church's collective prayer discernment capacity would grow. A case study evaluating this was conducted at Knightstown United Methodist Church, Indiana, over seven weeks. Data collection methods included online leader survey, individual leader Zoom interviews, and congregational questionnaire. Results from this case study can be used to evaluate the training as an option offered to all United students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

United Theological Seminary is an extraordinary institution that offers excellence in academia infused with the living, active presence of God's Spirit. I am immensely appreciative of the visionary leadership of United's President Kent Millard, the vibrant environment of our "Open the Floodgates" doctoral focus group mentored by Dr. Brian Law, the dynamic academic consultancy of Dr. Calvin Lane, and the steadfast encouragement of my peer associate, Dr. John McGill. Especially, I acknowledge with gratitude the unique design of United's Doctor of Ministry program. It has provided a framework within which to research deeply, to learn specifically, and to dream expansively about how to inspire, equip, and unleash God's Church to feast upon prayer.

On a personal level, I thankfully acknowledge that the completion of this thesis has been spiritually fueled by my husband Andrew's ongoing, persistent prayers. And I appreciate lifelong "prayer mentor" Oswald Chambers, who through his books has spiritually guided me ever more richly on my own prayer journey. Finally, I recognize the motivational influence of my two world-changer grandsons, Gavin and Beckett, whose enthusiastic, creative ideas for God's "new and next" have been a constant reminder that anytime during earthly life is the perfect time to dream a new God dream—even a Doctor of Ministry degree.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the countless leaders and their congregations across our country and beyond who have courageously added what I call “breakthrough” prayer, asking God to break through with new possibilities and next steps, as central to church life, ongoing. May the continued outpouring of God’s responses to these prayers, opening the floodgates of God’s miraculous Spirit, enable the Church of Jesus Christ to be unleashed as a spiritual movement transforming and reconciling the world beyond our human imaginations. Especially, this dedication includes the leadership and members of Knightstown United Methodist Church, Indiana, who participated in my thesis project’s case study to assess the efficacy of their implementation after attending a Breakthrough Prayer Initiative training. Thank you for believing that prayer makes a difference!

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ABBREVIATIONS

BTP	Breakthrough Prayer
P/L	Pastor/Leaders Survey
UMC	United Methodist Church

The Church's cause is ordinarily more or less successful, according as the Church's friends are more or less fervent in prayer.

—John Wesley, *Wesley's Notes on the Old Testament* (commentary on Exodus 17:11)

INTRODUCTION

The first two chapters of the book of Acts provide a potent paradigm of what the Church of Christ is to be like. As the followers of Jesus gathered in continual prayer in what is referenced today as the Upper Room, the Holy Spirit so filled and directed them that they emerged out the door and into their mission field, brimming over with the good news of Jesus. Sharing the irresistible gospel through relevant communication that each person could understand increased the number of new followers. Spiritual transformation and discipleship thus spread throughout multiplying gatherings of believers, always centralized on prayer plus teaching and lived-out accountability among the community of faith.

The church of Jesus Christ, from the very beginning, was intended to be a dynamic movement that spread and grew. It was fueled by prayer that called for surrender of self in order to make room for God's preferred next steps to be discerned and then to unfold both personally and collectively. Scottish Bible teacher Oswald Chambers, in his best-selling daily devotional *My Utmost for His Highest*,[1] maintained that just as physical food nourishes and enlivens the human body, so prayer is the non-negotiable "food" that vitalizes the body of Christ called the Church.

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[1] Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (New York, NY: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1935), 241.

Throughout the book of Acts, early leaders of the movement of Jesus continuously placed prayer at the center of daily discipleship, of decision-making discernment for ministry structure and leadership selection, and for divine clarity when seeking next evangelistic missional strategies. An ongoing prayer practice that routinely included "upward and outward" focused requests for God's guidance, replicated throughout individual and corporate gatherings of Christ followers, is a defining characteristic of the church referenced repeatedly throughout the New Testament Epistles.

According to the book of Revelation, however, five of the seven churches mentioned in chapter two were admonished because the miraculous fruit of an ongoing prayer-fed center of transformational discipleship practice had waned. What had happened? Nominal faith, tolerance of idolatry, and Christianity in name only had resulted in several settled-in church "institutions" rather than living spiritual movements activated by a surrendered prayer focus. Prayer is the direct fuel line to the fullness of Christ's life in us. As Jesus himself clarified, "I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."[2]

The five churches named in the book of Revelation are not alone. The New Testament prototype of the movement of Jesus called the Church, bolstered by prayer that included discernment of God's direction and new possibilities, has both waxed and waned throughout the centuries since. When a congregation prioritizes investment in

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[2] John 15:5, New American Standard Bible (NASB). Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this document are from the NASB.

good works for those in need rather than in a primary investment before all else in prayer seeking both spiritual growth and God's guidance, for example, the church of Jesus can become an organization busy with self-administration and management tasks, rather than a spiritual movement that flourishes and increases.

I have observed levels of spiritual vitality with resultant abundance or dwindle of spiritual fruit in congregations I have been called to pastor, and in several hundred churches alongside which I have served as trainer and consultant. It is my urgent contention that a problem exists. Pastors and their leaders may be comfortable with individual prayer themselves, but many do not possess the practical skills needed to launch and promulgate a vigorous life-giving corporate prayer initiative (including requests for God's next steps) that engages all whom they lead and shepherd. When pastors and their leaders have not been equipped with such skills, congregations or ministries may drift into plateau, decline, and possible closure.

It is crucial for pastors and church leaders to be equipped to orchestrate, as the center of congregational life, ongoing churchwide prayer that includes asking the Almighty for divine guidance and next open doors in order to increase collective prayer discernment capacity. As with the early church in Acts, a feast of prayer nourishes the body of Christ, the Church, with strength, energy, and motivation as it becomes comprised of what God intends: energetic, growing, faith-filled believers courageously bearing the lifegiving message and tangible love of Jesus outward.

My project sought to validate the efficacy of an optional training that could provide every present and future United Theological Seminary student with the skills to launch and sustain an organic churchwide prayer movement, asking for God to break

through with next steps and new possibilities in their own church or ministry setting. The project accomplished this through a case study of a church whose pastor plus five leaders first attended a Breakthrough Prayer (hereafter BTP) Initiative training I provided, and then implemented what they learned across their church in order to instigate prayer asking God for new possibilities congregation wide. The BTP training I created and led was informed and enhanced by the various areas of research represented in this thesis and motivated by the contexts of my own personal journey of prayer and prayer ministry leadership, as explained in chapter one.

Chapter two considers the biblical foundation found in David's corporate prayer leadership as described in 2 Samuel 5:17-25. When faced two different times with unexpected challenges, David immediately responded by turning to God in prayer, asking for direction, and then stepping forward, together with his troops, in obedience to the guidance he received. Analysis of David's prayer leadership practices speaks to leaders of God's people today, providing a paradigm for putting prayer first when unexpected circumstances come, asking for the Almighty's direction, and then heeding it.

Chapter three provides the historical foundation for this project, centered around the 100-year prayer vigil of Herrnhut, Germany. First, I trace the communal prayer movements during the several decades preceding the Herrnhut vigil. Then, in order to identify and appreciate the factors contributing to Herrnhut's collective prayer momentum, I offer an investigation into the spiritual backgrounds of key figures involved in Herrnhut's century of prayer. The specific prayer leadership practices of those individuals can further inform and assist leaders of God's Church today in order to

energize their churches' prayer focus that includes requests for and discernment of God's next steps.

Building upon this, chapter four explores John Wesley's theology of prayer as being the "prevailing grace."[3] Wesley's own prayer journey, the theological influences that shaped his understanding of the centrality of prayer and his own prayer practices, his interaction with Herrnhut's leaders and subsequent adaptation and innovations to Herrnhut prayer practice learnings for his own growing movement all provided crucial research to establish the Wesleyan theological underpinnings of my research. Of note was the discovery that Wesley both wrote and spoke of what he called "Watching Prayer," analogous to what I have termed BTP: even as one prays asking for God's spiritual transformation, one needs also to ask and then watch for God's divine direction.

Given how clearly the biblical, historical, and theological foundational research illuminated the need for practical leadership practices to fuel corporate prayer movements, Chapter four delves into the interdisciplinary foundational research of Community Organizing Theory. My goal was to discover whether the tools of a community organizer, intended to rally a group to a common cause to generate positive change, had similarities to the tools David, the Herrnhut leader Zinzendorf, and John Wesley also deployed in their prayer leadership strategies. Saul Alinksy and his original definitions of community organizing, scriptural consideration of community organizing applications, and contemporary research that identifies today's essential skills for

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[3] John Wesley to Miss March, March 29, 1760, in *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley,* ed. John Telford (London, UK: The Epworth Press, 1931), 4:90.

community organizers offer a clarifying, comparative perspective to the aforementioned figures.

The research described in each of these chapters informed the content of the eventual BTP training version I developed and offered in 2023 through United's Innovation Center for pastors plus their teams of leaders. In February 2023, the pastor plus a team of five leaders from Knightstown United Methodist Church, Indiana, attended this training and then returned to their church to launch and fuel implementation of congregation-wide prayer asking God for new possibilities and next steps (BTP). The final chapter, Project Analysis, describes a case study of Knightstown Church one year after the pastor and leaders attended the BTP training. Assessment of the training's efficacy regarding whether the resulting BTP Initiative set the stage for greater spiritual discernment of God's activity and guidance occurred through online pastor and leaders' individual surveys, individual in-depth Zoom interviews with the pastor and each leader, and an online questionnaire offered to congregational members. My hypothesis was that if the BTP training provided implementable strategy and tools to lead a congregation in ongoing prayer seeking God's new possibilities, pastor and lay members would report increased collective prayer discernment capacity. The case study's results confirmed the efficacy of the training to equip pastor plus leaders to implement this strategy using the tools provided, and their congregation did indeed report increased corporate prayer discernment capacity as documented within the Project Analysis chapter and highlighted in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Context

Upon the landscape of the prayer-centered construct in the book of Acts that defined the original movement of Jesus we call the Church, my contextual analysis begins with the dynamics of the early Methodist movement in America. Its breakout history, as it raced across what became our country, expressed the DNA of John Wesley's core passions that were in alignment with those of the early church: spiritual revival through personal encounter with Christ, plus the centrality of prayer practices embedded in spiritual growth and discipleship among gathered groups of believers. According to Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, by the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the organic Methodist movement had resulted in sixty-five churches that included roughly 3% of the population. By 1850, the numbers had surged to 13,305 Methodist churches that included 34% of the population, or one in every three people.[1] Methodism monopolized the market share beyond any other American Protestant effort of the day.

The unrelenting Methodist heralds who took the good news of Jesus across ever-widening new frontiers were usually "circuit riders" without formal theological education

[1] Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 156.

but on fire with their faith. They were rewarded by numbers of new converts to Christ rather than by growing bank accounts of monetary riches. The early horseback church planters were motivated by their own personal encounters with God that had resulted not only in conversion, but also in a longing to ensure others had opportunity for the same. Typically, a circuit rider's primary game plan in any new geographical area included leading prayer-saturated worship gatherings that both invited and set the stage for God's miraculous, transforming connection with human souls to potentially take place, and then catalyzing new Christ followers into ongoing small groups that Wesley called class meetings. These established an ongoing regular environment for prayer, Bible study, noticing and naming God's divine responses and activity throughout daily living, and encouraging the maturing of faith. The simple strategy of the early circuit rider approach resulted in so many new communities of faith that a single circuit rider might attempt to regularly visit and manage up to thirty "charges" on a horse-ridden circuit that could be larger than 200 miles.[2]

The Methodist movement finally gained its initial early denominational structure as of the 1784 Christmas Conference held at Lovely Lane Chapel. There the first lay preachers were ordained as elders, Wesley's Sunday service format was approved as a forerunner of the eventual *Book of Worship*, and discussions began about the dream of eventually launching a college to educate clergy.[3] The Methodist Episcopal Church was officially born.

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[2]John H. Wigger, "Holy, Knock-'Em-Down Preachers," *Christian History Institute*, 2021, https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/knock-em-down-preachers.

[3] Joe Iovino, "The Christmas Conference: 10 Days that Started a Church," *United Methodist Insight*, December 18, 2018, https://um-insight.net/in-the-church/umc-global-nature/the-christmas-conference-10-days-that-started-a-church/.

As the structure of the new Methodist Episcopal Church denomination fleshed out over the next years, the responsibilities of circuit-riding preachers who shared only the credential of on-fire faith were gradually scaled back. More full-time clergy emerged with formal theological education gained in either Europe or at one of the burgeoning numbers of new American educational institutions, of which 250 were launched between 1865 to 1899 alone.[4] The denominational structure began to assign Methodist Episcopal clergy to a single church location for a year or longer, replacing the lay or local preachers who had continuously rotated through large circuits and who had relied on church members, in between their visits, to promulgate a continuous climate of leadership, prayer, and spiritual growth. By 1890, documented attendance trends of American Methodist churches, previously on an continuous upswing, began a noticeable decline that has continued every year since to the present.[5] By 1900, any time limit on how long a full-time clergy could remain at the same station was completely removed by the Methodist Episcopal General Conference. Methodist campgrounds, formerly used for decades of exciting revival services that invited God's Spirit to move and speak anew among the attendees, shifted into picnic ground usage, retreat centers for education, or vacation cottages construction.[6]

The Methodist movement was itself becoming an institution, transitioning and organizing to align more closely with the national issues and priorities surfacing during

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[4] *The Bonebrake Theological Seminary Bulletin,* Vol. XLV, No. 3 (Dayton, OH: Bonebrake Theological Seminary, 1946), 3.

[5] Finke and Stark, *The Churching of America,* 164.

[6] Donald G. Kohrs, *Chautauqua: The Nature Study Movement in Pacific Grove, California,* (Pacific Grove, CA: Donald G. Kohrs, 2015), 71.

what historians later called the "Third Great Awakening" in America.[7] From approximately 1890 on, racial tensions, financial crises, and other societal pressures pushed the Methodist Episcopal Church toward deepening engagement in what has been referred to as the "social gospel." In 1907, Walter Rauschenbusch's defining book *Christianity and the Social Crisis* proclaimed the goal of all religion was to improve life quality for all persons. Escalating faith-based activism sought to address systemic improvements across government and social service resources. "Social salvation," Washington Gladdon's terminology, aptly defines the perspective of denominational leaders of the day who had come to view such as a viable expression of Wesleyan roots.[8]

During his lifetime, John Wesley himself had both preached and written that the Church's purpose first was to offer persons conversion to Christ, then accountable discipleship with scripture study and prayer. Motivated by a new sacrificial heart of love and guided through prayer, faith-filled followers of Christ would then manifest Christ's tangible acts of compassionate love on behalf of the disenfranchised, the poor, the marginalized. Now, however, social action on its own emerged as the primary congregational task.

Worship attendance continued its decline. Learning about Jesus and the Bible metamorphosed into Sunday School Christian education, rather than the longtime Methodist trademark class meetings (small groups) that practiced honest accountability with scripture study, corporate prayer, and resultant witness about personal discipleship

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[7] Robert William Fogel, *The Four Great Awakenings & the Future of Egalitarianism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 2000), https://press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/256626.html.

[8] Christopher H. Evans, "How the Social Gospel Movement Explains the Roots of Today's Religious Left," The Conversation, July 17, 2017, https://theconversation.com/how-the-social-gospel-movement-explains-the-roots-of-todays-religious-left-78895.

growth. The Methodist Episcopal Church eventually underwent several divisions due to justice issues and racial prejudices, as well as navigated mergers with smaller Methodist denominations along the way. In 1968, the turbulent year of American history that included the death of Martin Luther King, a major merger with the Evangelical United Brethren Church denomination resulted in a name change to The United Methodist Church and ended the racially segregated Methodist Central Jurisdiction.[9]

As social reform and justice for all people remains an urgent and ongoing priority to the work of the Gospel, the United Methodist Church in America has continued as an institution focusing extensive energy into administration of resources to help address these needs even as congregational attendance has continued its downward slide. Small groups remain an oft-recommended element of importance for American United Methodist Church congregations, and on the official denominational "end of year" required report form each congregation must list how many small groups have been active. However, long gone from a portion of United Methodist congregations in America are the Wesleyan essentials of prayer and class meetings featuring Wesley's accountability "Questions"[10] that facilitated spiritual discipleship. The role of corporate church prayer now seems to have become, for many pastors and leaders, an occasion to ask God to bless their "caring community" efforts as well as to protect and provide for the various needs and concerns of members and those they know.

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[9] Heather Hahn, "Amid Tumult of 1968, a Church Came Together," *UM News*, March 29, 2018, https://www.umnews.org/en/news/amid-tumult-of-1968-a-church-came-together.

[10] Chris Wilterdink, "Everyday Disciples: John Wesley's 22 Questions," *Discipleship Ministries: The United Methodist Church*, October 25, 2016, https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/everyday-disciples-john-wesleys-22-questions.

Specifics of Current Context

The immediate current context in which I find myself is United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. The specifics of this context will be considered upon the broader landscape described above.

According to *The Bonebrake Theological Seminary Bulletin* in 1946, a United Methodist precursor denomination called United Brethren in Christ made a historic decision at its 1869 General Conference: to establish and open a theological seminary to formally train its pastors and leaders. This fit with the general religious trend of that time to move from lay preachers toward educated clergy. A Board of Education was appointed, the city of Dayton, Ohio, was identified as the seminary location, and three clergy were elected to comprise the first faculty team. Union Biblical Seminary, as it was initially called, launched in 1871 with eleven students attending classes hosted by a local church. Reverend Milton Wright was the first chair of the seminary's executive committee and is also remembered as the father of airplane inventors Orville and Wilbur Wright. At the seminary's launch service, faculty member Reverend Lewis Davis proclaimed, "Many of our members have long prayed to see this day, and lo, it is here!" The seminary's birth was thus acknowledged as God's answer to prayer.[11]

The 1946 third quarter issue of the *Bonebrake Theological Seminary Bulletin* contains additional historical details. In its early years, Union Biblical Seminary became called a spiritual "powerhouse of prayer," a term popularized by the famous preacher Charles Spurgeon.[12] As prayer requests arrived from everywhere, seminary students and

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[11] *The Bonebrake,* 3.

[12] Lewis A. Drummond, "The Secrets of Spurgeon's Preaching," *Christian History Magazine*, Issue 29 (1991), https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/secrets-of-spurgeon.

faculty would gather together to pray over each. Later, reports of God's miraculous answers and breakthroughs would arrive by mail to further motivate and encourage those at the seminary to keep ongoing, daily prayer at the center.

God's hand of blessing was evident upon the new seminary, and by 1879 funds became available for the construction of a building with classrooms, a library, and student housing. A 1923 survey of the sixty-seven enrolled seminary students (each of whom also engaged in pastoring, serving in local church ministries, teaching in Sunday Schools, or helping with the Y.M.C.A.) documented that through their efforts beyond the classroom, more than 350 persons had made decisions for Christ. The seminary educated students while also functioning as well as an active, practical corporate powerhouse of prayer equipping students to replicate and lead the same type of prayer asking for God's divine guidance in their own individual ministry settings.

In honor of John M. Bonebrake's generous financial gift to help develop an improved campus facility for expanded academic education, Union Biblical Seminary was renamed Bonebrake Theological Seminary. In 1928, the seminary moved to distinguish between who was enrolled in "graduate school" and who was enrolled in the more practical ministry "diploma school" of theology. Eleven years later, all practical education and training other than the official academic graduate school studies were discontinued. By 1937, each graduating class adopted a tradition of gifting the seminary with tangible items or a collective financial donation to enhance the appearance and comfort of the school's physical property, which was a different legacy than the previous practice of reporting how many had been led to Christ by students during a given year. Another annual tradition began in 1938, when students and faculty united for a full day to

invest their time together not in prayer, but in planting new trees and shrubs on the campus property to improve its appearance. By 1945, the seminary leadership declared in its third quarter bulletin: “A school exists for its students.” It would appear that the seminary's focus swung inward, rather than remaining fueled by the centrality of ongoing prayer among instructors and students that engaged spiritual focus upward and outward as they asked continually for God’s miraculous activity and guidance forward.

In 1946, the United Brethren in Christ denomination merged with the Evangelical Church denomination to form the Evangelical United Brethren Church (EUB), and Bonebrake seminary became likewise affiliated. It underwent a name change to United Theological Seminary in 1954 after merging with the former Evangelical Church denomination’s seminary. In 1968, as already noted in the first section of this chapter, the EUB merged with the Methodist Church to form The United Methodist Church, and the seminary became one of thirteen official United Methodist seminaries.

Since then, the history of the seminary has included periods of functional engagement with social gospel issues embraced by The United Methodist Church, periods of financial solvency challenges, and forays into new partnerships and efforts of varying success and longevity. Students from more than thirty-seven different denominations and ten different countries are enrolled in United Theological Seminary’s programs today, according to Karen Clark, United’s Registrar.[13]

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[13] United Theological Seminary student information system report. Data represents the 12-month unduplicated headcount from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024.

My Ministry Journey

Though my parents rarely spoke of prayer or faith in our home, they diligently took all three of their children to Sunday school and worship with them every week at the local United Methodist Church in our Midwest small county-seat town. Thanks to the influence of Methodist circuit-riding preachers traced back several generations on both sides of our family genealogy, this was our family's consistent practice from my earliest memory. As a young child I remember sensing the Presence that I thought must surely be God during services in the sanctuary. I often looked down the long rows of pews at faces of the members who sat expressionless and silent, and wondered if anyone else sensed God there also.

Despite faithful church involvement, it was not until I was sixteen years old that my older sibling explained to me the good news of Jesus and my opportunity to surrender to a new life in Christ. I remember hearing that it would bring an incredible future with a purpose that exactly matched who God had distinctively designed me to be, utilizing the unique wiring I had been given. Going forward I would need to follow Jesus and walk by faith, continuing to surrender everything in prayer, looking and listening to God for miraculous guidance step by step to live into this. I fell on my knees and said yes to this eternity-changing opportunity. From that moment on, prayers asking God for discernment and new possibilities became a daily spiritual lifestyle.

When I left home for college, my parents suggested I also find a church in the college's city to attend. I dutifully visited close to a dozen churches, but each seemed flat, boring, and sparsely attended only by elderly members. There was little prayer, and I could not even sense God's presence was *present*. I remember thinking how tragic it was

that God's Church in general seemed to have fallen fast asleep—even with the exciting message of Jesus it was designed to celebrate and share. *Why*, I remember concluding in my thoughts, *God's Church should become a movement again, as it was back in the book of Acts. Someday, somebody really should try to help make that happen….*

My college years included the now-imbedded prayer habit of asking God to reveal next steps of the Almighty's choosing inherent to my life's journey. This prayer practice brought the clarifying revelation that I myself was called to help unite and rally the movement of Jesus forward, to aid the revitalization of God's Church. After college, I headed for seminary to prepare.

Through the additional years of schooling, the United Methodist ordained ministry credentialing process, and then finally the appointment as associate pastor to my first congregation, I continued daily, incessant discernment prayer practices that sustained and guided me through deep learning, dark valleys, and mountaintops. I viewed my new church with pastoral, spiritual eyes that saw giftedness in each attendee, then moved into creating discipleship venues through which each could recognize what God had uniquely equipped them to do as they prayerfully discerned what would be fulfilling ways to serve the Kingdom work of Jesus. I also formed and facilitated a new prayer group that provided a lifeline of ongoing collective spiritual guidance and momentum as the church eventually doubled in active attendance. After several years I became the church's director of ministries and then the lead pastor. A Christian publisher recruited me to author a ministry "how-to" book, and I became a speaker and trainer helping other leaders learn to instigate prayer-discerned congregational deployment themselves.

My next clergy appointment was to a larger congregation that journeyed through several years of notable change and redesign to become (as depicted in the book of Acts) a spiritual surge of Jesus followers that grew and spread. Prayer for discernment of next steps and possibilities, together with uniting and inspiring both paid staff and congregational leaders to rally the church as a contagious movement serving the mission of Jesus, resulted in an invitation to write another book about practical church leadership strategies, and to speak and train in wider national settings. Next, my United Methodist bishop appointed me to his staff to create a congregational renewal initiative initially for potential-filled churches in our annual conference stuck on plateau or starting decline, and in need of a jumpstart into a new season of vitality. I became the director, trainer, and implementation guide for the new initiative, named the Missional Church Consultation Initiative (MCCI).

The change from leading my own congregation to having multiple congregations and their pastors to train, resource, and walk alongside presented an enormous learning curve. But from the start, I insisted the first step for every MCCI church had to be training to move corporate prayer (that included asking for God's divine guidance) to the center of congregational life. By then I had observed repeatedly that without active prayer such as this at its heart, a church indeed settles into the behavior of an organization where the leaders are focused on managing and administrating, rather than orchestrating a living movement of Christ that is spiritually transforming its mission field all around.

The MCCI spread over time to multiple other United Methodist conferences and beyond and has involved more than 300 churches and their pastors. It is now called the Floodgates Collective, platformed through United's Innovation Center.

Finding the Synergy

In fall 2019, United's Board of Trustees asked President Kent Millard to plan and convene a special retreat in February 2020. At that time, the seminary had reached what the Board viewed as a crossroads. Thanks to capable administrative management, the financial condition of the school was making slow recovery from a recent crisis, and enrollment was stable. The Board of Trustees was next seeking a new direction for the school that could distinguish it from other seminaries and would bring an upswing of relevance and impact. They requested the "Flight Plan 2020" retreat as a time to "come up with some new ideas," in the original words spoken to me by then Board of Trustees chair Jim Tharp.

The synergy between my own ministry journey and the trajectory of United's history intersected at this Kairos moment. As United's leadership looked for a way to shift from institutional reorganization to Spirit-led movement forward, the Board asked me to facilitate the February 2020 retreat. I accepted.

United's President Kent Millard invited 100 persons to attend including the board members, the United faculty, the United staff, a number of current students, and a representative collection of alumni. Given my personal spiritual history of prayer as crucial to discern God's next steps, as well as the years of investment in developing the strategy and implementation of prayer for congregations and ministries desiring to seek what God might have in mind next for their future, I realized that an ongoing outpouring of corporate prayer asking for God's new possibilities was necessary before the seminary's retreat attendees came together for their work. From creating and leading the MCCI with so many different congregations of all types, I had also learned how to

facilitate groups to create an atmosphere in which persons feel comfortable speaking aloud what they have heard from God, via prayer, about potential next steps. I realized this would be the ideal approach to use for the retreat's format.

I proposed that all 100 United retreat attendees each pray daily a short, additive prayer asking for God's divine guidance and next open doors through the forty days prior to the retreat. The prayer was created by Rev. Dr. Rosario Picardo (United's Dean of the Chapel at that time) and me. We decided to distribute it to all retreat attendees along with instructions, plus periodic additional prayer encouragement via email, throughout their forty-day prayer journey. All retreat attendees received this initial invitational email from me, which included the short prayer:

> Greetings, all those who plan to attend United Seminary's "Flight Plan 2020" Retreat!
>
> Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this historic gathering, as together we discern new ideas and possibilities for what God has next for resourcing leaders to change the world in Christ's name.
>
> As the body of Christ, our best foundational "fuel" as we prepare to seek God's next steps is collective prayer. Prayer asking God to open new doors, show us what we couldn't imagine ourselves—and that we will surrender our present to pursue where God's Spirit is leading next. We as retreat attendees have been called to this spiritual adventure of discernment on behalf of United. So let's begin today to fuel it with prayer together!
>
> According to 2 Timothy 1:7, "the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us **power**, love and discipline." The "power" God provides, as named in this verse, is the Greek word *dunamis*. This word references the supernatural power, the supernatural ability that is only given by the Almighty.
>
> What might God be able to do, what might happen, how might the Spirit respond if *all of us set our own cell phone or smart watch for 10:07 a.m. each day starting today through when we gather for the retreat* on February 13– and **each day we pause to pray together at that time, right wherever we are, for new ideas and possibilities for United to emerge through God's "dunamis" power?**

> Here's a *short breakthrough prayer we can each use daily* as we pray together at 10:07 a.m.:
>
> Miraculous God of breakthroughs,
> Speak, show and inspire us where your Spirit is leading next
> for United Seminary.
> Open doors that will usher in a new season
> Of creativity, faithfulness and fruitfulness
> in the name of Jesus.
> And together grant us
> boldness, courage and power
> without limits
> To step through the doors you open.
> Amen.
>
> The Greek word *dunamis* appears not only in 2 Timothy 1:7, but also more than 100 more times throughout the New Testament. So as we pray together daily, you'll also receive in your email inbox each day between now and the retreat's launch on February 13, a short devotional based on a situation or story in scripture that additionally utilizes and illustrates the impact of God's *dunamis*.
>
> May this be an exciting season of holy expectation as we all embrace God's *dunamis* in our breakthough prayer together for United's future… and as we each become spiritually prepared to speak God's inspiration regarding next potential ideas and steps when we gather for "Flight Plan 2020."

At the retreat, President Millard reminded the attendees that the first record of the seminary's history included becoming known as a prayer powerhouse with an outward focus. He wondered aloud whether the seminary might be returning to its "first love" of placing prayer asking for new God possibilities at the center, given the extensive daily prayer prior to the retreat. Throughout the retreat, attendees continued to pause and pray together periodically for discernment as they shared what they had heard from God as innovative ideas and possibilities for United. By the end, 500 unique ideas had been named and recorded for consideration as United's potential next steps.

Since the Innovation Retreat of February 2020, United has been racing to actualize a growing number of the retreat's new ideas, as well as encountering ongoing

additional new breakthroughs. Several new degree specialty programs are enrolling new students, and financial generosity by donors has been on a substantial and miraculous upswing. The seminary's debt load has been completely eliminated, and a campaign to establish a $10 million endowment fund for student scholarships is nearing completion.

Breakthrough Prayer in Action

As additional evidence of synergy between my ministry journey and that of the seminary, another breakthrough took place in January 2021. To fuel the fresh momentum of Spirit-inspired progress, the invention of a new "Bishop Bruce Ough Innovation Center" took place as a prayer-inspired idea of the Board of Trustees itself. The purpose of the Innovation Center is to create, develop, and offer ongoing novel resources for churches, ministries, and their leaders everywhere for the purpose of renewed vitality. I was appointed as the inaugural director of the Innovation Center startup.

From its beginning, I have been convinced that at the heart of the new Innovation Center effort must be a foundational cascade of prayer that includes faculty, staff, students, alumni and beyond. This is so that, yet again, United becomes known as a prayer powerhouse of miraculous Kingdom impact. The birth of the Innovation Center began with my own repeated praying and walking through the office suite area of United's building designated to house the new Center, asking God for divine guidance and gifts of financial resourcing for its physical renovation. I invited United staff and faculty, as well as church leaders and members from across the surrounding community, to likewise walk and pray through the new office suite space, saturating it with prayer requests for Kingdom impact. Through these many prayers asking God for provision,

open doors, and next steps, an interior designer offered to provide conceptual redesign ideas for updating the space as well as color scheme and recommendations for furnishings. A talented remodeling contractor, part of one church's team that had prayer walked through the Innovation Center's designated office space, offered to assume responsibility for the proposed space renovations at significantly reduced cost. A local flooring company, hearing about the new Innovation Center startup's office suite needs, supplied new carpet at a clearance price.

The new Innovation Center's office prayer-fueled physical space renovation symbolically paralleled the simultaneous prayer-directed creation of the Innovation Center's initial resource offerings for churches and leaders. I invited United's faculty and staff to be present the day the original carpet was removed so that renovation work could begin. They each moved and prayed through the office suite, writing foundational prayers on behalf of the Center's future contributions and impact in black marker all over the then-bare concrete floors.

Though a few months into the renovation work a record-breaking cloudburst of rain unexpectedly flooded the office suite space, destroying the progress and causing a remodel re-start, the prayers written on the floor remained vivid. Over the ensuing months, the remodeling contractor reported that working in the prayer-saturated space consistently brought him a powerful sense of God's sacred presence and an unexpected but long-needed inner healing. Persons unexpectedly stopped by United and the Center's new office suite with Spirit-led intention to pray and walk through it. On days extra hands were needed to assemble new furnishings that had suddenly been delivered, cheerful volunteers unexpectedly showed up. The interior designer, who had become part of the

growing momentum of those regularly praying and walking through the office suite space, arrived near the end of the renovation bringing boxes of individually selected décor items she gifted and arranged throughout, also hanging all wall art, as her final overture to bless the Center. Most significantly, what had been a small storage closet at the rear of the office suite space was transformed into an inspiring, peace-filled prayer room. Its new door features a glass window panel etched with the words, "The Powerhouse," in memory of the original nickname of the newly birthed, prayer-fueled seminary back in 1871. The Innovation Center had now established a prayer room as space available ongoing for any who frequent United and long to feast once again on prayer.

At the Innovation Center's official dedication event to celebrate the office suite's completion, each of the many in attendance were gifted with a small olive wood prayer cross intended as a keepsake reminder to maintain ongoing prayer for guidance in their walk of faith. United leaders were impressed by the fresh, updated atmosphere of the Center's renovated space. Generous donors were inspired to fund complementary interior design renovations, as well as paint and décor updates, to the entire academic classroom hallway where the Center is located. Then the ripple of prayer-initiated breakthroughs continued on to a complementary furnishing and décor refresh of the student lounge area at the opposite end of the hallway. The resulting overall physical atmosphere of light and appeal has brought United's students, according to their many positive anecdotal comments, a sense of invitation and hope as they attend classes on campus.

In recent years, God's Spirit has led several new faculty to United who each share a unique prayer passion, reminiscent of the original faculty of 1871. United itself has

incorporated breakthrough prayer throughout its financial development campaigns and as a cornerstone for other seminary-wide initiatives. The Innovation Center has established, within United's Doctor of Ministry program, an "Open the Floodgates" focus group for doctoral-level students passionate about prayer for new possibilities as central to the spiritual movement of God's Church. The stage has become set as United lives into its original DNA and its most spiritually potent season of preparing fruitful leaders of Christ's Church thus far.

One problem still exists, however. In the seminary's early years of history, the students themselves were actively involved together in the school's daily prayer rhythm. Upon completion of their diploma or program, they were thus well-schooled in how to set up a powerhouse of prayer practice asking for God's divine guidance and next steps in the congregations they led and served. The problem I see is that United has no ongoing optional means to prepare current students with nuts-and-bolts training in how to launch and fuel what I now refer to as an ongoing "Breakthrough Prayer Initiative" (hereafter BTP) across the congregations or ministries they lead or will lead in the future.

The students receive an excellent academic education at United. The seminary has revived a vital spiritual atmosphere through contextual ministries, weekly chapel services and an annual Holy Spirit seminar. But robust engagement in a corporate prayer strategy, initially so characteristic of the seminary's first years that graduating students had also gained foundational practical skills to duplicate as congregation-wide prayer movements in their next respective ministry settings, is missing.

My proposed solution to this problem is to provide optional BTP trainings through the Innovation Center for United students. These would add strategy and tools

for launching congregation-wide prayer asking God for new and next possibilities to each student's ministry leadership "toolbox." Since this project's case study validates the training's efficacy, the complimentary training could be regularly offered at United through the Innovation Center's resourcing. This solution would address the lack of skills in many well-intended student pastors and ministry leaders who believe they and their congregations should pray but are not familiar with how to effectively excite and engage ongoing prayer for God's new direction churchwide. Given my own ministry journey's passion that has been centered upon prayer for God's new possibilities personally, and likewise my ministry leadership in the local church and as a trainer of churches, I view this as a potential hinge moment in the history of United: to swing fully back into commitment to preparing faithful, fruitful leaders of God's Church who are also prayer movement facilitators.

Conclusion

Motivated by my personal experience with prayer in ministry, and recognizing the current movement within United Theological Seminary towards a recentering of prayer, I explore in this project the potential complimentary addition of a BTP training for United's students to enable them to lead and rally active, ongoing ministry-wide prayer for discernment of God's next possibilities. Prayer, as Oswald Chambers taught, is the "food" of the body of Christ we call the Church. Given the longtime languishing attendance numbers of the United Methodist denomination (and other denominations) in America, it is clear that many congregations are in the habit of only snacking on prayer, rather than enjoying an ongoing feast of prayer to fuel church vitality and Kingdom

fruitfulness after the model of the early church in Acts. Equipping students to unleash their congregations as prayer movements has the potential to positively change the course of their spiritual history.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The primary Bible passage this chapter engages is 2 Samuel 5:17-25 (New American Standard Version). David's legacy of prayer is significant, given that Jewish tradition attributes to David much of the five books of the psalms.[1] The selected text portrays key exegetical, literary, historical, and social pivot points in David's rising leadership trajectory as he transitions onto Israel's throne for a new season. Already previously distinguished for his unswerving personal commitment to seek and then follow divine direction, David, in the selected text, is now revealed as equally faithful in prayer for God's guidance in his role as newly anointed king of Israel. The preceding Biblical narrative already established David's commitment to prayer. In this passage, David assumes executive leadership of Israel as well as prayer leadership for his troops.

I contend that by in-depth examination of the role, style, and context of David's demonstrated prayer leadership for his constituency in the selected text, various key learnings emerge that carry both relevancy and course-correction for leadership of congregation-wide prayer throughout God's Church today. This chapter's introduction intends to summarize at a high level the relevant dimensions of the selected biblical text to the identified problem hypothesis.

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[1] Michael Widmer, *Standing in the Breach: An Old Testament Theology and Spirituality of Intercessory Prayer* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 225, http://site.ebrary.com/id/11087920.

The next section of the chapter considers a biblical exegesis of the selected text, specifically focusing upon key Hebrew words and their implications for understanding the dynamics of the two stories in the passage. The original Hebrew of the text offers a rich venue of biblically significant insights illuminating these verses. A subsequent literary exegesis of the passage also contributes to its impact. A historical exegesis of the selected text relating specifically to the problem hypothesis adds another enlightening dimension: a more detailed understanding of the specifics of David's habitual prayer practices for the purpose of seeking discernment of God's guidance using prayer traditions of the day. Appreciating the foundational expanse of Hebrew history upon which the selected text is uniquely positioned, and why, is also relevant to the problem hypothesis. Finally, exegesis of the social, political, and material pressure and influence eventually affecting David's priority of prayer for divine guidance reveals relevant strategic insights.

Recognizing and appreciating scriptural evidence of the miraculous, active role of God within the interplay of prayer for guidance, inherent in the selected passage, has emerged through this research. It serves as a beacon to guide and shape the summary section that will conclude this chapter and sets the stage for the Historical Foundations chapter to follow.

Biblical Exegesis

An exegetical study of key Hebrew words in the selected text contributes to understanding the biblically historic nature of David's habitual prayer practices for the purpose of seeking discernment of God's guidance. Examining more specifically how

David's commitment to prayer for guidance impacted and contributed to the confidence of his surrounding team offers further insights into prayer movements in the Church today. Understanding what dynamics ensured that the two battle stories featuring God's victories would become integrated into Israel's written and oral story-telling reveals added depth. The usefulness of greater study of this text informed and shaped the content of my proposed hypothesis and the content of the BTP training assessed by the case study.

Following is the selected text, 2 Samuel 5:17-25:

> When the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek out David; and when David heard of it, he went down to the stronghold. Now the Philistines came and spread themselves out in the valley of Rephaim. Then David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You give them into my hand?" And the LORD said to David, "Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand." So David came to Baal-perazim and defeated them there; and he said, "The Lord has broken through my enemies before me like the breakthrough of waters." Therefore he named that place Baal-perazim. And the Philistines abandoned their idols there, so David and his men carried them away.
>
> Now the Philistines came up once again and overran the Valley of Rephaim. So David inquired of the LORD, but He said, "You shall not go directly up; circle around behind them and come at them in front of the baka-shrubs. And it shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the baka-shrubs, then you shall act promptly, for then the LORD will have gone out before you to strike the army of the Philistines. Then David did so, just as the LORD had commanded him; he struck and killed the Philistines from Geba as far as Gezer.

Within this nine-verse account, newly anointed King David twice faces a challenge by Israel's longtime ongoing adversary, the Philistines. David first prayerfully inquires after God's direction in each case. Once he receives guidance, David obediently leads his troops to take the specific next steps God has revealed to him, and thus accomplishes victory in both circumstances. In each of the two scenarios, David faced a

predicament that he had not caused himself.[2] The description of David's formula of encountering a challenge by immediately seeking God's directive and then boldly rallying his constituency to courageously step out and follow God's guidance illustrates a spiritually infused leadership strategy never utilized by David's predecessor, King Saul, when facing off with the same enemy.

The placement of this report early in the narrative exposes a Biblical emphasis on the centrality of prayer in David's early leadership. The mention of David seeking God's direction twice further emphasizes David's intent to practice spiritual faithfulness. The selected text lays a clear literary narrative foundation upon which the rest of David's evolving monarchy history unfolds both through the ensuing chapters of 2 Samuel and elsewhere in the Old Testament.

The original Hebrew of this text offers an exegetical venue of biblically significant insights. Following is a deeper consideration of key Hebrew language words and phrases for broader biblical perspective and context.

> When the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek out David; and when David heard of it, he went down to the stronghold. (2 Sam 5:17)

This verse indicates that when David heard about the Philistines' arrival, he "went down" to "the stronghold." Henry P. Smith speculates that since there had been no provocation, the Philistines were worried David had become too powerful.[3] They spread out across the Valley of Rephaim, an expansive location thought to be southwest of

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[2] Tony W. Cartledge, *1 & 2 Samuel*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2001), 429.

[3] Henry P. Smith, *Samuel I and II*, International Critical Commentary (London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 1977), 290.

Jerusalem.[4] When David became aware of their presence, David did what he often did when under attack, according to his biblical biography (2 Samuel 23:14 includes another example), and headed to what he perceived as his spiritual stronghold. A more thorough understanding and appreciation of the "stronghold" down to which David headed provides a clearer awareness of the historic scriptural precedence for seeking solitude for prayer, and prayer's intended purpose within the general spiritual milieu of the children of Israel begins to materialize.

The Hebrew word transliterated "Matsuwd" (Strong's 04686) and translated into English as "stronghold" appears twenty-two times in the Old Testament. In psalms traditionally attributed to David (e.g., Psalm 18:22), this word has also been translated as "refuge," "fortress," or "high tower" when used as a description of God.[5] In this text, David's descent to a literal stronghold in order to seek God's guidance through prayer would have served as a literal demonstration of God as refuge to his troops and the Israelite people.

Scholars differ about the actual geographic location of the stronghold to which David headed for prayer. Although Jerusalem was known as the citadel of Zion, Smith theorizes that this biblical text may be a later insertion in the canonical document and occurred prior to the capture of Jerusalem.[6] If that were the case, this would explain why David did not remain at his headquarters in Jerusalem and instead headed elsewhere to

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[4] Smith, *Samuel I and II*, 290.

[5] This information is from The King James Version Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon of the Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Lexicon, which is keyed to the "Theological Word Book of the Old Testament." These files are public domain.

[6] Smith, *Samuel I and II,* 290.

pray. That location could have been the cave at Adullum, where David had earlier hidden from Saul to pray.[7] McCarter agrees that David's stronghold referenced here was likely a fortress outside the city of Jerusalem, about sixteen miles southwest.[8] In 1 Samuel 22:1-4, Adullum had been used as a place to hide. In my selected text, the stronghold's location served as a place to seek God's guidance and a platform from which to launch God's divinely guided counterattack.[9]

> Then David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You give them into my hand?" And the LORD said to David, "Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand." (2 Sam 5:19)

While at the stronghold, David "inquired" of the Lord. This Hebrew word transliterated as "Sha'al" (Strong's 07592) appears 173 times throughout the Old Testament, and twice in the selected text it describes David's prayer entreaties to God for direction. Making inquiry, consulting, asking a favor, and even beggary are all connotations of this Hebrew word, revealing the intensity of David's request. After receiving God's guidance, David implemented it and achieved victory over the Philistines.

> So David came to Baal-perazim and defeated them there; and he said, "The Lord has broken through my enemies before me like the breakthrough of waters." Therefore he named that place Baal-perazim. (2 Sam 5:20)

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[7] Bruce C. Birch, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 2:1243.

[8] P. Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel,* The Anchor Yale Bible Commentary (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 153.

[9] Arnold A. Anderson, *2 Samuel,* Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2015), 133, ProQuest eBook Central.

"Baal-Perazim," the transliterated Hebrew name (Strong's 01188) David gave to the location where the victory took place, is also an unknown location. Likely it is the same location referred to in Isaiah 28:21 as Mount Perazim, near the Valley of Rephaim. The New English Bible translates the name's location as "Baal of Breakthrough," a portrayal of how God's might, like torrential floodwaters, had swept through the Philistines. The name David chose for the victory's location emphasized that God had been the principal player.[10] Joyce Baldwin translates the name's location as "Lord of the breakthrough," unfolding so conclusively that it seemed to happen "like a bursting flood."[11] Marvin Sweeney interprets the name's location as recognizing that David broke through the Philistines "as water breaks through a dam."[12]

David's proclamation of God's victory and naming of the location as a place of God's almighty breakthrough served a significant purpose for the people of Israel. By calling out (the Hebrew word used here transliterated as "amar," Strong's 0559, and may also imply boasting proudly) the miraculous activity of the God of breakthrough, he emphasized what had happened was the result of his preceding prayer for guidance.

> Now the Philistines came up once again and overran the Valley of Rephaim. So David inquired of the LORD, but He said, "You shall not go directly up; circle around behind them and come at them in front of the baka-shrubs. And it shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the baka-shrubs, then you shall act promptly, for then the LORD will have gone out before you to strike the army of the Philistines." Then David did so, just as the LORD had commanded him; he struck and killed the Philistines from Geba as far as Gezer. (2 Sam 5:22-25)

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[10] Anderson, *2 Samuel,* 93.

[11] Joyce Baldwin, *1 & 2 Samuel,* The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Nottingham, United Kingdom: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 14.

[12] Marvin A. Sweeney, *1-2 Samuel*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 215.

An unknown length of time after, the Philistines mounted a second attack at the same location of the Valley of Rephaim. Once again, David "inquired" (Strong's 07592) guidance from God. This time God provided a distinctive strategy, which David and his troops followed exactly to garner a final victory over the Philistines. David and troops were to listen to hear the sound of "marching" in the tops of the "baka-shrubs." The Hebrew word used here for "marching," transliterated as "Tsa'ad (Strong's 06807), typically described the tinkling sound of amulet or ankle stepping chains. The Hebrew name translated "Baka-shrubs" (Strong's 01057) in the NASB has also been rendered into English for other Bible translations as shrub-like balsam trees which drip sap (NIV), aspens (NEB), and even mulberry trees (KJV).[13] Apparently the wind of God's spirit would rustle the leaves as a signal. Wind is a motif of God's presence and guidance repeated elsewhere in the Old Testament narrative. Robert Barron postulates that a purpose of God's wind in the trees was to conceal the sound of David's army as they advanced.[14] Even more illustrative is Paul Evans' conclusion that

> The sound of marching is the sound of God's "hosts/armies" who are fighting on behalf of Israel. This miraculous sound of God's heavenly army is similar to the story in 2 Kings 6:17 when God reveals the presence of his heavenly army to Elisha's servant by opening "his eyes" to see "the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."[15]

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[13] Anderson, *2 Samuel,* 94.

[14] Robert Barron, *2 Samuel,* Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2015), 49.

[15] Paul Evans, *1-2 Samuel*, The Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2018), 345, ProQuest eBook Central.

Literary Exegesis

The accomplishment of decisively defeating the Philistines did not occur at any point in previous King Saul's reign (cf.1 Samuel 9:16), while the two battles led by David in the selected text finally ended the Philistine domination.[16] Significant in both the literary and historic salvation story of the Old Testament, the incidents described in the selected text established David's initial official leadership as grounded in reliance upon God for divine guidance. This is the final occurrence of asking about God's will in the biblical account until David seeks divine guidance through Nathan the prophet.[17]

As we look more closely, the selected text account falls between two larger scriptural sections: the Rise of David (1 Samuel 16 to 2 Samuel 5:10) and the Succession Narrative (2 Samuel 9:1-20:26; 1 Kings 1:1-2:46). Brueggemann presents a compelling case for the literary agenda of those who crafted this section of scripture. He asserts that the selected text containing the two battle accounts was positioned in between these two sections to portray that David's initial ascendency into official leadership of Israel centered on a genuine and vigorous commitment to seek God's direction. This placement of the selected text in the biblical literature then allows us to view both sides of the drama of David's monarchy trajectory from when he ascended into kingship, his role in these two battle stories, on through his political and social transformation, and finally into an era when his chief priority became power.[18]

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[16] Smith, *Samuel I and II,* 1243.

[17] A. Graeme Auld, *I and II Samuel*, The Old Testament Library (La Vergne, TN: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 404, ProQuest eBook Central.

[18] Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel,* Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2012), 244, ProQuest eBook Central.

Smith adds that the selected text highlighting David's commitment to God's guidance as he ascended to kingship was intended to be a literary masterpiece illustrating his God-imbued assistance to achieve such victories. Murry and Dell describe David's shift following the defeat of the Philistines as one moving from spiritual "Deference" to spiritual "Difference." In his initial posture of spiritual deference to God, David surrendered to God, sought divine wisdom and guidance in the stronghold, and implementing God's directives for victory. As his monarchy career evolved, his spiritual and moral posture shifted from godly deference to a marked difference between God's priorities and David's self-serving behavioral choices. Scholars have noted David's original spiritually fruitful deference specifically at play in the selected text. Afterwards, David's vacillation between deference and difference is illustrated by examples in 2 Samuel 6 and 7, when Nathan's prophetic voice calls David back into spiritual deference and accountability.[19]

The Old Testament literary theme of collective memory theory is a key aspect of the selected text. Intentional place naming connected the physical scene of incidents with the spiritual import of what unfolded, thus weaving them into the fabric of widely recounted stories of God's dominance throughout the history of Israel.[20] Here, David's identification of Baal-perazim in the selected text helped Israel continue to consolidate its ongoing sense of identity around the God of breakthroughs.

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[19] D. F. Murray and Katharine J. Dell, "Divine Prerogative and Royal Pretension. Pragmatics, Poetics and Polemics in a Narrative Sequence About David (2 Samuel 5.17-7.29)," *Journal of Theological Studies* 51, no. 2 (2000): 604.

[20]Murray and Dell, "Divine Prerogative," 604.

Historical Exegesis

The books of Samuel, as well as Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, all share the perspective of Deuteronomy. For this reason they are collectively referred to as the Deuteronomic history, an overview of the story of the Israelites from the Canaan Conquest until the Babylonian Exile.[21] In the phraseology of Schniedewind, all literature has a historical particularity.[22] The historical particularity of the selected text most relevant to the problem hypothesis focus around two prongs of examination. The first relates to David's prayer inquiries as described in the text, and consideration of the means of prayer discernment Israel traditionally practiced and recognized. The second prong is the historic significance of the placement of the text in Deuteronomic history, as previously referenced.

We begin with the first, which is an understanding of historic Israelite practices of prayer which are represented but not articulated in the selected text. According to Tsumura, prayer for divine guidance in ancient Israel was traditionally handled in two phases.[23] These phases, in the form of two prayer inquiry questions, appear in vv. 17-21 and in vv. 21-25 (and also in David's prayer for guidance in 2 Samuel 2:1-4, as another example). The first phase or prayer inquiry question was seeking an oracle, asking God for a "yes" or "no" reply. In the selected text, on both occasions David begins with such a prayer question: "Shall I go up against the Philistines?" (explicit in vs 19, and implicit in

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[21] Anderson, *2 Samuel,* 26.

[22] William M. Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David: The Reception History of 2 Samuel 7:1-17* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1999), 10.

[23] David Toshio Tsumura, *The Second Book of Samuel*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019), ProQuest eBook Central.

vs 23). We are not told specifically whether, as per historic tradition, a priest was present to administer the oracle by use of an ephod that contained the Urim and Thummim. These would have been cast to indicate God's answer. We are told that God's answer is yes, however. Then the second phase or prayer inquiry question David asked was whether God would provide a victory, and in both cases the answer was again positive. On the second occasion, however, the selected text describes God's specificity for David's attack strategy. This would not initially appear to be the result of the simple yes/no capacity of the Urim and Thummim. According to McCarter, certain scholars have concluded that David's gain of the divine battle strategy could have become possible through a series of increasingly precise yes/no prayer inquiry questions, all answered by the Urim and Thummim. Others theorize that the details of the battle approach were gleaned from oral report-backs after the actual battle, later added to enhance the scriptural account. Another possibility would be that a different means of divination was deployed to discern David's attack approach.[24] What seems most useful for the purpose of informing the problem hypothesis is to observe that David directly inquired of God for guidance, did not proceed until guidance was provided, and then followed the guidance with obedience.

The second prong of historical significance for consideration is the placement within the biblical document of the selected text and its two accounts of prayer resulting in victory. According to the selected text itself, David had already ascended to the kingship of Israel. The increase in power created by the uniting of Israel and Judah presumably was the threat that motivated the Philistines' move to the valley of Rephaim (vs 18) and would have logically occurred between David's ascension to the throne (2

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[24] McCarter, *II Samuel,* 155.

Sam 5:1-3) and the capture of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:6-10). However, the selected text appears after this. For what purpose?

McCarter synthesizes the theories of biblical historians such as Alt in answer to this question by proposing that the placement of the two battle accounts (the selected text) was strategic to validate David's fulfillment of Abner's prophecy found in 2 Samuel 3:18:

> For the Lord has spoken regarding David, saying, "By the hand of My servant David [a]I will save My people Israel from the hand of the Philistines, and from the hands of all their enemies."

Placing this account immediately after David's affirmation as king emphasizes David's spiritual leadership, his relationship to God, and the fulfillment of God's will in the history of Israel.[25]

David as historic fulfillment of Abner's prophecy is also evidenced by the final action of David and his troops noted in verse 21:

> And the Philistines abandoned their idols there, so David and his men carried them away.

And again, in verse 25:

> Then David did so, just as the LORD had commanded him; he struck and killed the Philistines from Geba as far as Gezer.

In verse 21, David and troops carry away the Philistine idols after the battle victory. The Philistines had transported their idols along with battle gear in hopes that their gods would help them prevail.[26] Likely David's intent was to destroy the idols or false gods completely, making way for the return of the Ark to a primary position of

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[25] McCarter, *II Samuel,* 159.

[26] Andrew Steinmann, *2 Samuel,* Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 97.

importance (1 Chronicles 14:12). In verse 25, David and his troops take another step to further purge the area of the Philistines themselves, "just as the Lord had commanded him." The repeated challenges of the Philistines were over.[27] The selected text further confirms David's obedience to God, contrasting radically with Saul's disobedience to God that had ultimately led to his demise. [28]

Socio-Political Exegesis

The selected text carries socio-political significance, since this pair of pivotal stories signal the establishment of King David's God-centered leadership. At that time, this implied that David's God-centered focus would also manifest across the nation of Israel, bringing not only political and economic stability but also spiritual anointment upon the nation as a whole.[29] Kelle and Strawn underscore this by explaining:

> The purpose of biblical historiography [is] to narrate the past as the authors understood it to have happened in order to create faith in the religious establishment, authenticate a certain social and political system, and generate a sense of common ethnic identity.[30]

David's initial commitment as king to seek God's guidance before making decisions and moving forward, evidenced in the biblical narrative both in his personal history up till this point as well as in both the battle stories of the selected text, would be tested over time as his material possessions, economic resources, and political power all grew to

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[27] Eugene H. Peterson, *First and Second Samuel,* Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 160, ProQuest eBook Central.

[28] Craig E. Morrison, *2 Samuel,* Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), lxxxi, ProQuest eBook Central.

[29] Birch, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," 2:1242.

[30] Brad E. Kelle and Brent A. Strawn, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Historical Books of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2020), 39.

compete with and challenge his "prayer first, then follow and honor God's guidance" habits. The societal, political, and material pressures that adversely affected David's commitment to seek Divine guidance crucially inform the problem hypothesis.

It is appropriate here to note the larger picture within which the selected text is situated. Before David appears in 1 Samuel 16, the previous fifteen chapters of the book set the stage for his arrival and presence. Brueggemann sees three factors that together created the social and political import of David's initial ascendency to official leadership. The first was the interplay between Saul and Samuel as an initial backdrop. That served to then highlight the second factor: the bigger-than-life arrival of David onto center stage, who was infused with divine purpose beyond his mere human gifting and dynamism. The third factor was Yahweh as principal actor who speaks and acts behind the scenes.[31]

Saul's termination in battle as the enemy Philistines triumphed (1 Samuel 31) signaled not only a political defeat but also a spiritual one. The Philistine gods had defeated the Israelite god. The Philistines trumpeted this as a threatening signal to the Israelites.[32] David's ensuing political rise to become king over Judah was marked by spiritually centered occasions, such as the prayer inquiry of David to God for direction in 2 Samuel 2:1-2. As David's house grew in power and Saul's house diminished, David continually named God as his provider, victor, and guide. David's political and spiritual power came together as he was anointed king over Israel by the elders of the tribes of Israel (2 Samuel 5:4). David's increasing social, spiritual, and political impact propelled his capture of Jerusalem, the stronghold of Zion, and it became the "city of David" (2

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[31] Bruegemann, *First and Second Samuel,* 2.

[32] Feidhlimidt T. Magennis, *First and Second Samuel*, New Collegeville Bible Commentary (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 22, ProQuest eBook Central.

Samuel 5:7). Jerusalem was not in Judah, nor was it an Israelite city, so by capturing it with his own troops David secured a location from which he could rule over both Judah and Israel without bias.[33] The biblical account heralds the pinnacle of David's political, spiritual, and social influence in 2 Samuel 5:10: "David became greater and greater, for the Lord of hosts was with him."

In the selected text, David moves politically and militarily from conquest to expansion, with God divinely guiding the way. The people's affirmation and support are at an all-time high, undergirded by confidence that God's anointment of Israel resides upon them as upon David. As per the biblical narrative following the selected text, David has the ark delivered to Jerusalem, further strengthening covenant tradition for Israel.

Confirmation of David's vacillating shift of focus from the living God to material luxuriance appears when David asks for Nathan's inquiry of God to allow him to build a house of cedar for Yahweh (2 Samuel 7). God's response through Nathan realigns David spiritually: the living God lives in the people of Israel, not in a house of cedar. Moreover, God's covenant is to build through David's family lineage and descendants a house that would endure forever. It would be David's son Solomon who would receive permission to build a literal house for God and further establish David's kingdom.

The downfall of David's morality of character through involvement with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:1-27), further conflict and divisions between his offspring and former allies, and eventually competition with others for Israel's leadership all reveal both David's loyalty to God and to individuals as well as his struggle for power. In his last words (2 Samuel 23:1-7), David affirmed God's intent to establish justice in the

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[33] Magennis, *First and Second Samuel,* 5.

world through Israel's primacy. Yet David's own life history after the God-guided battle victories of the selected text painted an increasingly different story of reality.[34]

The conclusion I draw here is that the fusion of spiritual, political, and social elements that merged to platform the two stories in the selected text became kindling to fuel Israel's increasing fiery momentum forward as God's chosen. David's spiritual and political credibility gained major "trust points" with those he led as the two battle accounts were told and re-told. The formation of Israel's divinely intended identity as God's people was crafted to significant extent by the initial commitment of their new King David to centralize the prayerful pursuit of God's guidance.

Summary

Several themes surface from the biblical, literary, historical, and sociopolitical exegesis of the selected text that appear relevant and informative to the identified problem and proposed hypothesis case study project.

From biblical exegesis of key words appearing in the selected text, it is viable to note from David's prayer leadership example the following practical themes. The first is that finding or returning to a physical location ("stronghold") to pray and interact with God provides an environment of spiritual focus. Another is acting on God's guidance when it is received is an essential response after earnest prayer inquiry for God's direction. Finally, speaking ("calling out") the breakthroughs or victories of God and naming them ("God of breakthrough" as the example in the selected text) builds spiritual confidence for both leader and followers. This also establishes handholds for the telling

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[34] Magennis, *First and Second Samuel,* 21: 13e, 13f.

and re-telling stories of God's miraculous victories that fuels both spiritual capacity and momentum for the practice of prayer inquiry asking God's guidance.

From consideration of literary exegesis, an awareness of "deference" versus "difference" as demonstrated in how one responds to prayer guidance is significant. Also relevant is the understanding of "collective memory theory" achieved not only by the placement of the selected text overall Davidic narrative but also by how the text's stories were reported. This underscores what was already mentioned earlier in the summary: the crying out to celebrate God's victory, and the naming of the location as a spiritual milestone of God's activity, creates a hook for the constituency's memory and review. A question considering the collective memory theory is whether recounting God's breakthroughs and miraculous activity together in communities of faith today provides the same motivational spiritual currency as it did in ancient Israel. That question became one included in the case study project (chapter six).

From consideration of historical exegesis, what emerges as relevant to the problem statement and hypothesis is the accountability David likely experienced with the usage of traditional prayer inquiry via the priest's oracles. If historical prayer precedents were indeed operative in the selected text, David did not enter his stronghold to pray and then emerge with divine directions he alone received. The spiritual authority of the priest provided accountability and partnership in the prayer inquiry process.

From socio-political exegesis, an observation that emerges with relevance to the problem and hypothesis project is the direct connection between the level of the leader's primary prayer discernment practice and response to God's guidance versus the level of unity, justice, and harmony among the people of God. It could be concluded from

David's leadership biography in scripture that when the leader vacillates and shifts to pursuit of power or possessions, a ripple effect takes place. The people's relational and spiritual unity likewise unravels into pursuit of the same.

A final question that remains apart from these evidential exegetical themes is this: to what extent does corporate prayers also contribute to discernment of God's guidance? If the answer is based solely upon the two prayer stories in the selected text, it would appear that only the primary prayer of the anointed leader is necessary to gain God's divine guidance for the whole. From that premise, the selected text would be a counterargument to the problem statement, which contends that the leader should also equip and rally the entire constituency also to pray, listen, and discern God's direction collectively.

This final question serves as a link to usher in the next chapter, that of Historical Foundations. It presents an investigation into another group of God's people in more recent history, Herrnhut, including a close look at its leaders who also prioritized prayer. I have continued to investigate the remaining question named above through the lens of Herrnhut's history.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The prayer movement upon which my Historical Foundations research centered is the congregation-wide prayer phenomenon of Herrnhut, which flowed continuously twenty-four hours each day without pause starting in 1727 for the next 100 years.[1] The story of the small community of believers in Germany is a catalytic excerpt of the overall history of Pietism's spread across Europe and beyond.

The first part of this chapter examines the phenomenon's broader historical underpinnings. I start with Philipp Spener's pietistic emphasis on the practice of personal spiritual disciplines. Spener's Pietism was not the only contributing element through which Herrnhut was birthed, however. Examining other influential historical stimuli along the way, from Spener to and through Herrnhut's birth and establishment, allows a comprehensive appreciation of the movement to emerge.

After delving into the specifics of King David's prayer leadership style in the previous Biblical Foundations chapter, the next part of historical research I pursued also included the prayer leadership style theme by looks at the leadership wiring of two different Herrnhut inaugural leaders: university-educated Nikolaus von Zinzendorf and layperson Christian David. Each brought a unique prayer passion and strategy to his

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[1] Leslie K. Tarr, "A Prayer Meeting that Lasted 100 Years," *Christian History*, 2024, https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/one-hundred-year-prayer-meeting.

leadership style. Since the selected scriptural text examined in the Biblical Foundations chapter provided description and facilitated study of the dynamics of David's prayer approaches but offered no details of his constituency's, understanding how the prayer leadership of these two Herrnhut leaders stimulated the Herrnhut constituency to ongoing dynamic corporate prayer provided invaluable input for my project's case study.

The third section of this chapter investigates the specifics of the actual structure of Herrnhut's ongoing unbroken practical prayer life together, the collective spiritual practices that both fed and bolstered prayer momentum, and the outwardly focused fruit of the unbroken congregation-wide prayer that flowed out on behalf of the message and mission of Christ. Specific questions to which I sought answers included the following: What fueled Herrnhut's motivation to pray? How were answers to prayer corporately recognized, named, and celebrated? How was the prayer emphasis continually positioned at the center of congregational life? By what means was the outwardly focused collective prayer momentum sustained?

The concluding summary of the Historical Foundations chapter spotlights the relevant learnings gleaned through the historical examination, identifies new contributions to the contours of the hypothesis project's case study, and poses next questions. Additional learnings and answers are further explored via the ensuing Theological Foundations chapter and Interdisciplinary Foundations chapter.

Broad Historic Spiritual Underpinnings of the Herrnhut Prayer Phenomenon

The Thirty Years War (1618-1648), a religious battle primarily fought across central Europe, is viewed as one of the most violent religious conflicts of the Church's

spiritual history. Originally sparked by religious disagreement between the Holy Roman Empire's Catholic and Protestant states, its resulted in excess of 8 million deaths from combat, disease, and famine. The war's actual motivation was faith and doctrine, but instead the politics of which group would govern Europe. The resulting continent-wide disillusionment with the institutionalized church was dramatic.[2]

After the Thirty Years War, a resulting general urgency arose across Germany for Protest revitalization and reform of church, state, and society.[3] Institutional religion evidentially had not provided effective means for inward, personal spiritual vitality for Christian believers. An increased shift away from organized religion toward unofficial personal practices that energized faith began to appear. At this time Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705), a significant theologically trained Protestant voice, constructed structured pathways for Lutheran Protestantism's quest to regain emphasis upon inward personal piety, referred to by historians as Pietism.

Spener, an orthodox Lutheran, built his pietistic premise upon the official confessional teachings and articles of his tradition. A writing he published in 1675, "Pia desideria," proposed specifics for what he believed would lead to church renewal. As described by Hans Schneider, Spener's signature emphases were these.

First, Spener maintained that the "visible church" and the "invisible church" should both exhibit a godly lifestyle so genuinely practiced that fruits of faith become apparent. While Spener conceded that the invisible church is Christ's true church, his

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[2] History.com Editors, "Thirty Years War," updated August 21, 2018, https://www.history.com/topics/european-history/thirty-years-war.

[3] Jonathan Strom, *Pietism and Community in Europe and North America, 1650-1850* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2010), 23.

reform efforts focused upon enhancement of the visible church in order to create consistency between the two that would be recognizable by people. Spener urged that clergy be required not only to complete formal theological education, but also to demonstrate active personal piety practices. Further, he believed the goal of the visible church's embodiment of the "priesthood of all believers" should include laypersons who also actively embrace inward piety practices. These spiritual elite, which he called "ecclesiola in ecclesia" ("little churches within the church"), would be unified in relational harmony and spread inward piety across the entire congregation as the visible church.[4]

Spener became a threat to creedal authority and the sacramental focus of Orthodox theologians in his day. They took an unfavorable view of his insistence that the Holy Spirit's activity in the spiritual transformation of believers is essential.[5] K. James Stein names Spener's carefully-organized efforts to apply Christian theology to daily Christian life as the chief reason he has been viewed with importance within the historic emergence of the German Pietistic movement.[6] A high-level overview of key figures in Central Europe's religious shift during this era identify him as the unofficial "Father of Pietism."

Next, my historic research moved to Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf 1700-1760), who met Spener (assumed by some scholars to have been his godfather,

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[4] Strom, *Pietism,* 24-25.

[5] Carter Lindberg, ed., *The Pietist Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Newark, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2008), 86.

[6] Lindberg, *The Pietist Theologians,* 96.

since he was a sponsor present at Zinzendorf's baptism[7]) as a child in the home of his grandmother where he grew up. Within the broadly varied renewal waves rippling across this geographic area, young Zinzendorf eventually played a significant role within the Herrnhut prayer movement phenomenon.

Zinzendorf learned in childhood the value of faith in Christ and the power of prayer, having been nurtured by his grandmother who was actively supportive of Spener's written materials with emphasis upon the cultivation of vital inner personal piety. At school, young Zinzendorf sought to evangelize his peers, giving creative leadership to the formation of small groups for the purpose of spiritual growth and prayer. Later, though he preferred theology and read voraciously from Spener and other leaders of Pietism in his personal time, he followed his family's encouragement to emulate his father's footsteps and enter the study of law at Halle. While there, he had the opportunity to meet Barthomaus Ziegenbalg, Halle-trained in German pietistic theology and a Denmark-recruited missionary to the Indies (India). Ziegenbalg is credited with first igniting Zinzendorf's missionary fervor to win others to Christ.[8]

When his law education was complete, Zinzendorf took employment at age 22 as legal counsel in Saxony. In 1721 he purchased the estate of Berthelsdorf in Oberlausitz near Grosshennersdorf.[9] He married Countess Erdmuntha Dorthea in 1722, with the

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[7] August Gottlieb Spangenberg and Samuel Jackson, *The Life of Nicholas Lewis, Count Zinzendorf, Bishop and Ordinary of the Church of the United (or Moravian) Brethren* (London, United Kingdom: Samuel Holdsworth, 1838), 1.

[8] Benjamin Schäfer, "Zinzendorf, the Moravian Revival and Unceasing Prayer," *A Yearning Heart's Journey* (blog), June 30, 2011, https://yearningheartsjourney.blogspot.com/2011/06/zinzendorf-moravian-revival-and.html.

[9] F. Ernest Stoeffler, "Zinzendorf and the Rise of the Renewed Moravian Church," in *German Pietism during the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1973), 133-136, https://doi-org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/9789004378421_005.

distinctive mutual understanding that theirs, at least to begin, was a partnership of "Christian warriors" in ministry together rather than romance.[10]

While Spener sought to revitalize Lutheran Protestantism across Central Europe through his lifetime, followed by Zinzendorf's life trajectory that brought him and his spiritual zeal for Spener's concepts to Berthelsdorf, another critical spiritual awakening was unfolding. It started in Silesia, a nation sandwiched in by Saxony, Prussia, Poland, Bohemia, Moravia, Austria, and Hungary. After the end of the Thirty Years War, only three northern Silesian principalities remained Protestant, with the rest under Roman Catholic regime. The population across Silesia was ragged, impoverished, and starving. Church parishes had been destroyed. Countless young Protestant children, orphaned and oppressed by the war, roamed the countryside and mountains grappling for food, means of work, and, as history reveals, spiritual focus.

The Silesian children's prayer revival began in 1707, when Silesia's children spontaneously began to gather on their own for reading Scripture, singing hymns, praying, and reciting Protestant catechisms and liturgy they had memorized in earlier times when families were intact and parish worship was more available. They would come together from everywhere twice or more daily, lying prostrate as they prayed to God for breakthroughs of peace and religious freedom. The children prayed fervently and openly for a deliverance miracle, and adults within sight would stop and watch the children with awe.[11] To be clear, the children's prayer gatherings (or "Kinderbeten," as

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[10] Stoeffler, "Zinzendorf," 137.

[11] J. Steven O'Malley, *The Origin of the Wesleyan Theological Vision for Christian Globalization and the Pursuit of Pentecost in Early Pietist Revivalism, Including a Translation of The Pentecost Addresses of Johann Adam Steinmetz (1689-1762)* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2020), 139.

they became known in German Lutheranism) were not wildly emotional or loud. Eyewitnesses described the children, approximately four to fourteen years old, as calm and devoted. Their gatherings were not organizationally structured. Rather, the children centered upon asking God in prayer, repeatedly and expectantly, for spiritual awakening, divine rescue, and for themselves to become God's messengers.[12]

That very same year—1707—an unexpected wrinkle took place in the political shaking out of geographic territory possession changes during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714). The Protestant king of Sweden, Karl XII, along with his military troops, was homeward bound and traveling through Silesia underway. Considering a legal provision in the previous war's treaty, he requested repossession of the seized Silesian Protestant churches from the Silesian-occupying Catholic Emperor Joseph I. Besieged and distracted by other current war challenges, Joseph I unexpectedly agreed.

The Silesian children's outside prayer gatherings continued organically for eight months until early 1708, when the Swedish military returned to stabilize the area. Upon witnessing the arrival of the soldiers, the children understood this to be a miraculous answer from God to their prayers for deliverance.[13] The Kinderbeten-led revival mushroomed, sweeping across the entirety of Silesia in five days with children pouring from the mountains and filling streets, praying everywhere. The spiritual awakening that begun in Silesia through the children's prayer began to manifest over the next three

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[12] Eric Jonas Svensson, *Kinderbeten: The Origin, Unfolding and Interpretation of the Silesian Children's Prayer Revival* (Eugene, OR: Wiph and Stock, 2010), Kindle 75.

[13] O'Malley, *The Origin,* 138-141.

decades into other parts of Central Europe via similar outbreaks of children's prayer for revival.[14]

Officials of the established Protestant church, threatened by their calm spiritual vibrancy, instructed the children participating in the original Silesian prayer movement to find churches in which to worship inside, rather than to continue open-air prayer gatherings. Many clergy denounced the children's prayer gatherings because they were happening informally in the open air, without official clergy leadership and facilitation.[15] Their revival subsequentially moved into and through Silesian congregations, attracting countless numbers of various nationalities as God's Spirit spread prayer and spiritual awakening through all ages.

The ripple effects of the children's revival led to the formation of massive Grace Church in Teschen, reported by eye-witness accounts to hold simultaneous worship services in both German, Polish, and other languages for 30,000 Poles and 40,000 German speakers.[16] The pastor of Grace Church was Silesian-born, Leipzig-trained Johann Adam Steinmetz (1689-1762) whose father, a Lutheran pastor, had been an admirer of Spener's pietism.[17]

An eventual spiritual disciple of Steinmetz, Christian David (1692-1751) was born to Catholic parents in Moravia. Recognized early as a sharp thinker with a mind of

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[14] O'Malley, *The Origin,* 139.

[15] Eric Swensson, James H. Barnes, and Peter C. Erb, "Kinderbeten: A Tale of Hope and Prayer," in *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity*, eds Christian T. Collins Winn, G. William Carlson, Christopher Gehrz, and Eric Holst (Cambridge, United Kingdom: The Lutterworth Press, 2011), 77-78, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1cgfbkp.13.

[16] O'Malley, *The Origin,* 203.

[17] O'Malley, *The Origin,* 182.

his own, he grew up with little formal education and entered a carpentry apprenticeship at age twenty-two. In the Protestant home of his trainer, David discovered a hidden Bible and resolved to read it. Spiritually inspired and deeply moved, he decided to become a Protestant.[18]

David's carpentry trade afforded him travel, and while in Germany near the Silesian border he met Johann Christoff Schwedler and Johann Andreas Rothe, early leaders of the Silesian revival. It was through Schwedler's pastoral care that David received Christ. Soon after, David was confirmed in the Protestant faith at Grace Church in Teschen across the Silesian border by lead pastor Steinmetz. Various personal meetings with Steinmetz, as well as his worship attendance at the widely diverse Grace Church, helped stir David's vision and missionary zeal to reach others for Christ. David, according to his own journals, confided to Steinmetz that he desired to help his fellow Moravians back home escape the heavy-handed Roman Catholic repression there. But Steinmetz cautioned him not to proceed until he had secured a safe location for them to colonize and worship freely.[19]

Rothe was a Leipsic-trained preacher influenced by German pietism through witnessing the Silesian Kinderbeten, connection with the Grace Church growth phenomenon, and collegiality with other like-minded leaders, such as Steinmetz. A winsome preacher, he was invited by Zinzendorf to provide a trial sermon for Bethelsdorf's vacant pastorate position. Zinzendorf was so impressed that he secured

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[18] O'Malley, *The Origin,* 201.

[19] O'Malley, *The Origin,* 203.

Rothe's official call to Berthelsdorf's pastorate on May 19, 1722. Zinzendorf also recognized Rothe's leadership skills and soon had further use for them.[20]

Specific Historic Spiritual Underpinnings of the Herrnhut Prayer Phenomenon

Through Rothe's connection Christian David was introduced to Zinzendorf, and in 1722 David had the opportunity request a safe settlement location on Zinzendorf's estate for a band of Moravian spiritual immigrants who had been religiously persecuted by the Catholic church in their homeland. Zinzendorf readily agreed. As the new settlement arrived and then grew to over 200, Zinzendorf assigned Rothe, already active as the spirited preacher for the refugees, to establish an orphanage in their settlement. By the time the orphanage opened, the settlement had named itself Herrnhut ("The Lord's Watch"). Due to clashes of divisive cultural and theological views, some inflamed by the traditional Lutheran orthodoxy of Rothe himself, the Herrnhut community displayed increasing conflict through its first few years of existence. Though Zinzendorf attempted to restore order as he could, without physical presence at Herrnhut his attempts were short-lived in success.

Finally, in early 1727, Zinzendorf took leave of his Saxon governmental employment. He relocated to live temporarily at the new orphanage in Herrnhut, feeling responsible for the settlement in every aspect. Using his talents for organizing and building relational and spiritual collaboration, he worked tirelessly until convening an all-person worship service on May 12, 1727. Zinzendorf, as Herrnhut's leader, successfully

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[20] *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology,* s.v. "Johann Andreas Rothe," accessed May 5, 2024, http://www.hymnology.co.uk/j/johann-andreas-rothe.

implored every resident who felt led to stay in Herrnhut to sign a document he had created for governance of its civil life called "Manorial Injunctions and Prohibitions." Soon after, every resident also agreed to sign a second document Zinzendorf created named the "Brotherly Union and Compact." The second document's intent was to order Herrnhut's religious life together.[21]

With these two significant steps, Zinzendorf led Herrnhut closer towards what he longed to see become the lived-out reality Spener's pietism had envisioned: the ultimate harmonious merger of the spiritually vital visible church and invisible church.[22] Even more, Zinzendorf's practical view of faith was that it should be a "religion of the heart."[23]

After Zinzendorf's two documents were signed in May, further actions were taken to advance Herrnhut's organization under twelve spiritual elders. Four of these were designated as chief elders, one of whom was Christian David, by Zinzendorf's use of the biblical lot. These were described as rolled pieces of paper, with either a "Ja" or "Nein" printed upon them.[24] Further development was done to structure the community's "bands" (also called "choirs") that had begun several months prior. Their purpose was to unite compatible groups of believers for regular scripture study, dialogue, and prayer. [25]

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[21] Paul Peucker, "The 1727 Statutes of Herrnhut," *Journal of Moravian History* 20, no. 1 (2020): 73–113, https://doi.org/10.5325/jmorahist.20.1.0073.

[22] Stoeffler, "Zinzendorf," 138-139.

[23] "Nikolaus von Zinzendorf: Christ-centered Moravian 'Brother,'" *Christianity Today,* October 2023, https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/denominationalfounders/nikolaus-von-zinzendorf.html.

[24] "Nikolaus."

[25] Stoeffler, "Zinzendorf," 139.

Acknowledged by the residents of Herrnhut as a major collective spiritual turning point was a worship service held later that summer on August 13, 1727, at Rothe's Berthelsdorf parish church. During Holy Communion celebration, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit washed over the Herrnhut community, adults and children alike, miraculously ending the community discord and reconciling all in Christ's love through brokenness and tears. This date was later marked as the "Moravian Pentecost," though no outward demonstrations of spiritual ecstasy or unusual spiritual manifestations were reported to have taken place.[26]

Christian David, remembering Silesia's spiritual awakening had been fueled by the Silesian Kinderbeten, began to beseech God for such a prayer awakening among the children of Herrnhut to further usher in full and genuine spiritual revival across the new community.[27] God answered David's prayer later that same summer of 1727 through the spiritual awakening of Herrnhut resident Susanne Kuhnel, eleven years old. She experienced personal, emotional, and spiritual crises as she observed the peace of her faith-filled mother's passing. For three days and nights Susanne's spiritual wrestling raged as she was held in prayer by the community. Ultimately, she experienced a breakthrough personal conversion to Christ, and three additional young Herrnhut girls each had a similar experience the same night. After hearing this news, Zinzendorf himself gathered with the girls and, kneeling, prayed with them. The entire community of

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[26] The Moravian Church, "August 13th: The spiritual 'birthday' of the Moravian Church," last modified August 2020, https://www.moravian.org/2020/08/august-13th-the-spiritual-birthday-of-the-moravian-church/.

[27] O'Malley, *The Origin,* 209.

Herrnhut came together to weep and sing. The Herrnhut children's prayer awakening was recorded as follows, from the *Daily Journal of Herrnhut* on August 23, 1727:

> Such an impulse of prayer came upon the boys and the girls that it was not possible to hear them without heartfelt emotion, and through Susanne Kuhnel an extraordinary movement arose in their assembly which became daily more true and serious….There was to be heard on August 29 from 10 at night until one in the morning a heartrending praying and singing by the girls…At the same time the boys were at prayer in other places. So powerful a spirit prevailed among the children as is beyond words to express.[28]

Following the summer of 1727, Herrnhut continued to evolve its practices of discipleship in Christian community with accountability for all ages. According to the historical research of Benjamin Shafer, the love feast, the washing of feet, nightly song services, and fixed morning hours of prayer were all established. Zinzendorf believed that hymns should be memorized, not sung out of songbooks, to better internalize authentic Christian faith.[29] All read Herrnhut's daily scripture (chosen by the casting of lots), which was followed by the development of the Daily Text Book still in use today.[30] The Text Book (later called the Watchword) originally provided a daily scripture segment or hymn segment, as short as possible, for all Herrnhut residents to use as a short, repeated "prayer-hold" throughout the day for the purpose of spiritual warfare.[31] Today, Herrnhut's descendants, the Moravian Church, still publish this, and it is used around the

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[28] O'Malley, *The Origin,* 210 (as cited in Ward in his translation, 127).

[29]Devandre Boonzaaier and Alethea de Villiers C, "The Moravian heritage of community musicking," *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa* 15, no. 1 (2019): 2, http://dtl.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/moravian-heritage-community-musicking/docview/2327764483/se-2.

[30] Schäfer, "Zinzendorf."

[31] W. N. Schwarze, "History of the Text Book of the Moravian Church," *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* 13, no. 3/4 (1944): 136, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41179303.

world in a spirit of Christian ecumenicism.[32] The "Daily Watchwords" is translated into at least fifty languages, considered to be the "oldest and most widely read daily devotional work in the world."[33] Herrnhut's small groups became more defined in purpose and identity, even banding at one point into "common households" of a single gender for the purpose of deeper discipleship. These eventually transitioned into "choirs," which were groups that shared housing and activities.[34]

Zinzendorf's longtime passion for mission, specifically to share the gospel of Christ, resulted locally in the spiritual conversion of new followers who eventually became Herrnhut residents.[35] His outwardly missional passion combined with that same latent desire already inherent in the Herrnhut community, planted there by Christian David and others who had taught that "missions was the task of the true church,"[36] and that it was not a sacrifice but a privilege and joy. In the words of Gary S. Kinkel, Herrnhut became Zinzendorf's channel to "preach the Gospel to every creature, and especially to those for whom no one else cared" as a spiritual movement of

> an intrepid, irresistible legion of missionaries undaunted by disease, distance, risk or death. And die they did, only to be replaced by new volunteers who joyously went to carry the news of the Savior…Moreover, these missionaries, lacking any theological training, were extraordinarily effective.[37]

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[32] Elizabeth H. Zorb, review of *Count Zinzendorf*, by John R. Weinlick, *The Christian Scholar* 41, no. 4 (1958): 625.

[33] "Moravian Moment #129—The Moravian Pentecost," Moravians.net, August 16, 2009. https://moravians.net/en/about-us/34-moravian-moments/231-moravian-moment-129.

[34] Stoeffler, "Zinzendorf," 140.

[35] Karl-Wilhelm Westmeier, "Zinzendorf at Esopus: The Apocalyptical Missiology of Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf—A Debut to America," *Missiology* 22, no. 4 (1994): 420, https://doi.org/10.1177/009182969402200401.

[36] Westmeier, "Zinzendorf at Esopus," 421.

[37] Gary S. Kinkel, introduction to *Christian Life and Witness: Count Zinzendorf's 1738 Berlin Speeches* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), xviii, ProQuest eBook Central.

Most relevant to the purpose of this chapter's historical research is consideration of the expanding and comprehensive centrality of prayer across the community of Herrnhut. The first "night watch" of prayer began August 5, 1727. Zinzendorf, fond of music and singing, requested that certain hymns be sung at the end of every night watch prayer meeting as attendees walked through Herrnhut's streets.

Then at one of Herrnhut's all-community prayer gatherings, Zinzendorf announced that the Holy Spirit had impressed upon him the scripture text of Leviticus 6:13: "Fire shall be kept burning continually on the altar; it is not to go out." To that end, he challenged Herrnhut to an ongoing prayer chain, with prayer every hour of every day. On August 26, 1727, thirteen days after the "Moravian Pentecost" worship service and shortly after the Herrnhut children's prayer awakening occurred, twenty-four males and twenty-four females—all ages, including children--stepped forward with commitment to pray earnestly for an hour each day (thus two praying each hour). Prayer shifts were chosen by the casting of lots. Eventually a structure named the Hutberg ("watch mountain") was built as a shelter for those praying at night or in inclement weather.[38] The roster of prayer intercessors blossomed into ninety groups of up to seven people each. Visitors traveled to Herrnhut to observe and marvel at the spiritual faithfulness of the prayer chain in action.[39]

The repetition of Leviticus 6:13 became a core uniting scriptural "mantra" for Herrnhut, repeated and proclaimed often, to motivate the urgency for continuance of its

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[38] Schäfer, "Zinzendorf."

[39] Schäfer, "Zinzendorf."

unbroken prayer chain. For what did the prayer chain teams pray? According to Herrnhut documents as described by Benjamin Schäfer:

> Basically, the prayer chain had two purposes: 1. "to lie prostrate before his throne both day and night, offering to him the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for all his kindness shewn unto them" and 2. "to lay before [the] Saviour, the distress and case of all who were known to them in or out of the Congregation." Praise and thanksgiving included the singing of songs and hymns, usually whenever the praying person was not able to pray for a full hour. The second function involved interceding for the sick and oppressed, for the fellow believers who were persecuted and imprisoned, as well as for their own village of Herrnhut, which also suffered from the crossfire of criticism. Furthermore, the intercessors felt "how highly needful it was, that the Congregation in its present state of infancy, and having Satan as her adversary, who slumbers not day or night, should be preserved from his wiles, and be under constant and holy guardian care." In order to fulfill their task most effectively, a weekly meeting was set up in which requests where shared and updated."[40]

With the increasing establishment of the Herrnhut community around prayer, the restless missionary heartbeat of Christian David on behalf of those who did not yet know the gospel became more urgent, as did Zinzendorf's. Both leaders took Herrnhut laity, as well as sent them, on evangelistic mission efforts across the known world. The laity's hearts likewise had been abundantly prepared through prayer and discipleship to risk all, to step out with courage, and to bring their faith and prayer practices far beyond Herrnhut to those without saving knowledge of Christ. History now recognizes Herrnhut as the source of the first known Protestant lay missionary movement, totaling 226 Herrnhut lay missionaries sent out with the good news of Jesus by the time of Zinzendorf's death in 1760.

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[40] Schäfer, "Zinzendorf."

Summary and Conclusion

The observations and learnings from both the study of Herrnhut's wider and also more specific historical foundations have proven, for the purposes of my hypothesis project, to be significant and project-defining.

First, Spener's efforts to shift the cognitive, dogmatic catechism repetition and organizational function of the established Protestant church of his day into a platform that encouraged personal spiritual vitality within congregants that would result in "fruit" is an important example. My project case study shares the same aim: to foster new spiritual buoyancy within churches by equipping pastors and church leaders to lead congregation-wide prayer.

Second, Zinzendorf's conviction about and tireless efforts to unite the Herrnhut residents into relational harmony by providing clear frameworks for both civil behavior and unified spiritual practices moved his constituency into a position to grow spiritually towards embodying God's invisible church. His selection of the elders who served as spiritual leaders, rallying all ages as they gathered into choirs for the purpose of spiritual growth, ensured that that the new spiritual practices became connection points to God through prayer. To Zinzendorf, spiritual care of individuals was as important as spiritual care of the flock as a whole.[41] Also, Zinzendorf's short refrain of Leviticus 6:13, repeated throughout Herrnhut like a short unified congregational prayer, showed the enduring influence of a biblical text used as a prayer mantra to inspire, focus, and motivate the congregation to pray ongoing. The addition of daily Watchwords, scripture segments to

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[41] *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality,* ed. Glen G Scorgie (Nashville, TN: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2011), 398, ProQuest eBook Central.

be used throughout each day as “prayer-holds” for spiritual warfare in the face of distractions and temptations, further unified Herrnhut’s individual and corporate prayer momentum.

Christian David’s entrepreneurial, independent wiring and his insatiable missionary heartbeat influenced Herrnhut’s outward emphasis of its prayer attitude. David’s relentless desire to bring the gospel to those who still lived in spiritual darkness enhanced the same in Zinzendorf, whose pastoral bond of leadership with the people of Herrnhut set the stage for their openness to hear God’s voice and find courage to follow God’s call across the known world to parts unknown.

Herrnhut’s own specific efforts to create an organization that encouraged and supported the practice of unbroken prayer across a century is a lesson to inform my hypothesis project case study also. The use of a short scripture as a repeated prayer mantra, the coalescing into prayer teams, the weekly meetings used for update of prayer requests and confirm answered prayers, the regular all-community prayer gatherings in order to pray together in concert, plus the outward-focused evangelistic surrender and openness to God’s call are all practices Herrnhut developed for what turned out to be successful corporate prayer momentum and spiritual transformation.

The primary new discovery I unearthed while excavating Herrnhut’s history is the profound spiritual wave emanating first from Spener’s German pietistic stage-setting, and then into the original Silesian children’s prayer movement. These are like the first two links in a Spirit-orchestrated chain. The Silesian Kinderbeten spontaneously occurred near the end of Spener’s life amidst the milieu of otherwise educated theological attempts, such as Spener’s, to help the central European Protestant church recapture

spiritual vitality. The composed, informal daily gatherings of young children to read scripture, recite the Lutheran catechism, sing hymns, and pray for God's awakening, deliverance, and peace were what finally manifested German Pietism's intent.

It pleased God to bless the Silesian Kinderbeten so significantly that the Holy Spirit created a mighty wave of renewal through the lives of children. That precipitated a rise of Silesian "megachurches," including Grace Church led by Steinmetz, drawing together a diversity of nationalities and languages in transformational worship and collective prayer. Steinmetz himself, a native Silesian sent by his pastor father to Leipzig for theological training in a center for German Pietistic thought, was a link in this chain. Steinmetz was drawn to interview for leadership of the worship and prayer phenomenon exploding at Grace Church. As the next link in the chain, a pastor connected to Grace Church set the spiritual stage for Christian David to receive justification by faith in Christ. Then it was at Grace Church that David became not only a recipient of the spiritual revival outplay of prayer resulting from the original "Kinderbeten," but also saw for himself the universal relevance of the gospel for all peoples. David's personal meetings with Steinmetz about faith and mission opened the door for him to articulate his desire to secure a location for spiritual freedom for Moravian believers still under religious oppressive governmental rule. Through David's acquaintance with Rothe, the Holy Spirit opened the door for David's connection with Zinzendorf, who was inspired to designate land on his property for settlement of the Moravian religious refugees.

Zinzendorf's giftedness in organizational strategy and structure, David's contagious missionary zeal partnered with Zinzendorf's, plus the carryover of enduring

value placed upon Kinderbeten and collective prayer's potential to spark corporate spiritual vitality were all additional links in the historical chain.

What stands out is that a spark from the original Silesian children's wave of prayer asking for God's awakening, deliverance, peace, and freedom also provided the same spiritually catalytic spark through the Herrnhut children's prayers for the awakening of their small community. Because Zinzendorf recognized, validated, and affirmed the "Kinderbeten" of a young Herrnhut girl by naming and championing the Holy Spirit's regenerative response to her prayers, others of all ages around her likewise moved more fully into the power of prayer for God's possibilities to the extent of placing it central in both personal and communal life.

Finally, this historical foundations examination produced several themes that informed my project, including: (a) the wholehearted "green and growing" spiritual vitality with personal prayer commitment of the leadership is essential; (b) a short scripture used as an ongoing collective prayer is a vehicle inviting God's Spirit to respond; (c) an outwardly-focused intent to corporate prayer is necessary to instigate the constituency to become a movement; and (d) it is vital to engage and cultivate the constituency's prayer life across all ages, not only adults. In fact, it is possible to argue from the historical foundations of Herrnhut that first cultivating the active, collective prayer lives of the children within a constituency may be the top initial priority that then, like the first in a row of dominoes, will trigger active prayer practices through the whole.

God later used Christian David as an influential connection for John Wesley with Herrnhut, providing Wesley a front-row, in-person experience when he visited in 1738. Wesley interacted, observed, and sought to theologically understand the Holy Spirit's

activity unleashed through extended unbroken congregational prayer there.[42] He noted in his journal the deep, prayer-infused faith of Herrnhut residents with whom he interacted, evidently moved deeply by their witness.[43] In the following Theological Foundations chapter, I examine Wesley's theology of prayer, which he called the "prevailing means of grace."

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[42] Kai Dose, "A Note on John Wesley's Visit to Herrnhut in 1738," *Wesley and Methodist Studies* 7, no. 1 (2015): 117.

[43] Dose, "A Note," 118.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The relevant theological foundation to be examined in this chapter is John Wesley's theology of prayer, which he identified as "the prevailing means of grace."[1] I assert that the Church's intentional inclusion of a breakthrough prayer component, asking congregation-wide for God's next steps and new possibilities to emerge, is in alignment with Wesley's expressed theological understanding of the participatory, grace-empowered dimensions of prayer. It aligns fully with his explanation of the dimensions of Holy Spirit's invitational, transformational, and directional interaction in response to the prayers of God's Church.

Wesley's theology and subsequent identification of prayer as the primary means of grace evolved through the course of his life. As a ministry practitioner himself for over sixty years, mostly on the move, Wesley penned no systematic theology despite his own educational training, voracious personal reading, and study. Rather, his theological frameworks have been pieced together by scholars through analysis of extensive collections of his sermons, letters, personal journals, written prayers, organizational ordinances for Methodist bands, classes, and meetings, scripture notes, and the enduring

[1] John Wesley to Miss March, March 29, 1760, in *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley,* ed. John Telford (London, UK: The Epworth Press, 1931), 4:90.

hymnody he and brother Charles Wesley composed for the spiritual and theological nurture of their growing Methodist movement.

One might assume that, following the Historical Foundations chapter detailing the etiology of the Herrnhut 100-year prayer phenomenon, the theological foundation now explored here would feature Herrnhut leader Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf's unique theology of prayer. As already noted, with his initial motivational leadership of Herrnhut, the community's around-the-clock corporate prayer continued unbroken for 100 years. It motivated dozens of lay missionaries to step out with the gospel of Jesus Christ across the known world at that time. However, the early theological parting of ways that took place between Zinzendorf and John Wesley centered upon differing views of prayer as an active means of grace. Wesley's theology of prayer, as the primary means within its dynamic and participatory Trinitarian framework of grace, has borne the greater witness of spiritual history through nearly 300 years of Methodism since. In fact, by 1909, the *New History of Methodism* by Townsend, Workman, and Earys already cited world Methodist statistics of more than thirty-five million Methodist worshipers across four continents.[2] Wesley's theological leadership, enlivened with prayer as the primary means of grace, fueled an eventual worldwide movement far exceeding Zinzendorf's in scope of enduring spiritual impact.

For Wesley, "spiritual respiration" described the supernatural, participatory outplay of a Trinitarian view of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through the dynamic

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[2] William J. Townsend, H. B. Workman, and George Eayrs, eds., *A New History of Methodism* (London, United Kingdom: Hodder & Stoughton, 1904), 531-2.

engagement of prayer as prevailing means of grace.[3] I conclude that the theological foundation of Wesley's understanding of prayer as the primary means of grace, including his imagery of Trinitarian "spiritual respiration," embodies a full-orbed prayer approach. It engages God's Church not only to be spiritually transformed into Christ's likeness, but also to simultaneously watch for the Holy Spirit's discernment for its "new and next" via an active spiritual prayer posture observant of potential-filled divine guidance.

The organization of this chapter proceeds as follows. First, the evolution of Wesley's own personal theological and prayer traditions is traced, including the topography of his encounters with mysticism and influential theological engagement with Moravian leaders. Second, a comparison of the increasingly creative prayer theology of Zinzendorf as it eventually diverged with Wesley's is illuminated. Third, description is provided of Wesley's theological understanding of grace with prayer as its primary means. Finally, a definition of the specific concept of his Trinitarian dynamic of "spiritual respiration" featuring prayer as the operative means of grace is explained. The conclusion of this chapter underscores how the addition of a breakthrough prayer component to the existing prayer life of God's Church is in alignment with "watching," a crucial means of grace identified within Wesley's theology of prayer, as a venue of discernment within the body of Christ of the Holy Spirit's supernatural direction forward.

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[3] Elmer J. Colyer, *The Trinitarian Dimension of John Wesley's Theology* (Nashville, TN: New Room Books, 2019), 95.

John Wesley, Mystics, Moravians, and Prayer

Born in England in 1703, John Wesley grew up with parents committed to their faith—a faith rooted not only in the Bible, but also in strict Anglican Church doctrine and structure. From an early age he and his siblings memorized "form" (written) prayers, observed a stringent daily schedule of scripture reading, recitation of the prayers, discipleship teaching administrated by his mother Susanna, and involvement in regular church life participation led by his father, an Anglican priest. As part of Wesley's own university theological education in pursuit of the Anglican priesthood himself, Wesley's formed and led the Oxford "Holy Club." Together with his close friends equally in pursuit of holiness, John and brother Charles structured regular group times to read scripture, pray, examine their spiritual lives, and purposefully engage in acts of service and mercy. In addition to these Anglican practices intended to cultivate Christian holiness, John also became widely read in early monastic spirituality and mysticism, noting in his journals authors such as Brother Lawrence, Madame Guyon, Fenelon, Thomas A Kempis, and William Law among many others.

Wesley's engagement with mysticism expanded his personal prayer practices as well. Modern mystics of his century claimed to engage so deeply in ongoing prayer that only spontaneous "ejaculatory" prayer (prayer words or phrases) periodically through each day were needed. Together with Wesley's deeply ingrained "form" prayers, he cultivated the habit of ejaculatory prayer and dutifully noted the frequency in his journals starting in January 1734 ongoing.[4] Likewise, Wesley recorded that until later serving as a

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[4] Robert G. Tuttle, *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 75.

missionary priest in Georgia and witnessing a gathering of Scottish Puritans in prayer, he had never observed extemporaneous prayer. Inspired by their example, he gradually expanded his own deeply entrenched Anglican form prayer practices to also include extemporaneous prayer regarding unique specifics of the day or moment. While first cautious that this might open the door to excess emotional enthusiasm, he eventually integrated it into his own devotional life and into the Methodist movement. For Wesley, the scriptural mandate to "pray without ceasing" found in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 was ideally served both by form (written) prayers that describe who the Triune God is and both ejaculatory and extemporaneous prayer that invites the Spirit's activity into specific circumstances and needs.

Wesley's regular diligence in personal and small group reading, scripture study, prayer, and acts of service did not, however, usher him into a deep, abiding connection of living faith as he longed. To use a term that later Wesley himself coined and defined, God's "prevenient grace" next brought him in contact with the heart religion of Pietism.[5]

This new influence was unexpectedly and dramatically introduced through Wesley's encounter with a Moravian bishop, plus twenty-six other Moravians, while all were on board underway to attempt missionary efforts in Savannah, Georgia. Wesley's favorable impression of the deep, undisturbed faith of the Moravian shipmates fueled his own longing for the same, as did the spiritual friendship he developed with them at sea and in Georgia. Wesley's own periods of dark spiritual discouragement and his hunger for a deep, confident faith connection to God like theirs became more pronounced. While

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[5] David Hempton, "John Wesley," in *The Pietist Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Carter Lindberg (Newark, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2008), 257.

in Georgia wrestling with an unsuccessful missionary pastorate, Wesley invested untold hours in theological conversation with Moravian Bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg. Spangenberg's question, whether he had experienced the "inner witness of the Holy Spirit" as an assurance of personal salvation in Christ, was troubling to Wesley.[6] Wesley's fascination with the mystical writers of his day, together with his Anglican holiness practices, had left him with a theology focused on the accomplishment of inner works as the pathway to peace and union with God: a theocentric approach to a God of love. Christ was a pattern, rather than the miracle of Atonement.[7]

Upon returning to England in 1738 after the failed missionary attempt, a discouraged Wesley connected with Moravian missionary Peter Bohler and continued ongoing theological discussions about his longed-for yet elusive pathway to full assurance of faith. Wesley's positive association with Peter Bohler and the Moravians in London continued, along with his foundational participation in the creation of a new religious society in Fetter Lane and his subsequent weekly attendance. Likely constituted by Peter Bohler, the new society founded May 1, 1738, had thirty-three "ordinances" or Orders by which to guide structure and discipleship activities. Notably, within these Orders were specific instructions for the assembly of bands (five to ten persons) with mandatory attendance plus appointed leaders. These were to meet regularly for the purpose of "spiritual friendship," and upon occasion all bands would meet together. Wesley was already familiar with the effectiveness of the Moravian "band" structure, having not only observed the Moravians' practice of bands for effective discipleship

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[6] Geordan Hammond, "Versions of Primitive Christianity: John Wesley's Relations with the Moravians in Georgia, 1735-1737," *Journal of Moravian History*, no. 6 (2009): 34.

[7] Tuttle, *Mysticism,* 118.

while on mission in Georgia, but also having experimented with implementing a version of the model in his own Georgia missionary congregation. [8] Significant to highlight within the thirty-three Ordinances of the Fetter Lane Society is Order 29, "That in order to a continual Intercession every Member of this Society choose some Hour, either of the Day or Night, to spend in Prayer chiefly for his Brethren."[9]

That particular order must have pleased Wesley, since already his growing awareness of prayer as a primary, active means of grace was emerging. However, missing from the Fetter Lane Ordinances was any mention of receiving the sacrament of Holy Communion. In historical context, this was likely because the initial Fetter Lane participants also attended the Church of England regularly and received communion there. But as time passed, usefulness of the Church's traditional means of grace became a theological issue that will be later explained as what diverted Wesley from Fetter Lane and his Moravian involvement.[10]

It was on May 24, 1738, at a Moravian meeting in a borough of London called Aldersgate, that Wesley finally experienced the "warmed heart encounter" with the Holy Spirit which he had sought: justification of faith through grace as described in Romans 5:1-2. That changed everything for him.[11] Robert Tuttle explains that at Aldersgate, Wesley finally moved theologically away from mysticism's position that human efforts of "love and self-discipline" were what led to assurance of relationship with God. It was

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[8] John S. Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies,* (London, United Kingdom: The Epworth Press, 1921), 199.

[9] Simon, *John Wesley*, 198.

[10] Simon, *John Wesley*, 200.

[11] Julian E. Pace, IV, "John Wesley and the Moravians: 1735-1741," last modified April 15, 2020, http://www.wesleyscholar.com/john-wesley-and-the-moravians-1735-1741.

not ongoing inner and outer works of righteousness that gradually led one to weather through one or more "dark nights of the soul" and eventually into the goal of a peace-filled relationship with God. Rather, Wesley perceived that those works of righteousness are only secondary fruits. Wesley now fully grasped from scripture that self-acknowledgement and ownership of human sin and repentance were the requisites for forgiveness and justification by faith offered by God's justifying grace. Salvation and faith, therefore, were the miraculous activity of a dimension of God's grace. Wesley realized that the only condition of the assurance of faith for which he had longed was yielding to this invitational grace of God, surrendering all wrongs via repentance, and receiving full assurance by faith the new life of the risen Christ.[12] The victorious Christ, through the Atonement, provided triumph over Satan's darkness.[13] Only after embracing justification by faith would the active transforming (sanctifying) grace of the Holy Spirit be provided for the process of ongoing transformation into spiritual maturity, which would be what evidentially produced the fruit of inner and outer works of righteousness.

Only a few months after the pivotal Aldersgate occasion, Wesley traveled to Herrnhut, Germany, to become acquainted with Nicolas Ludwig von Zinzendorf and his team, including layperson Christian David. He also had great interest in observing the small group "band" discipleship organization and accompanying community-wide Moravian prayer initiative choreographed by Zinzendorf. It is helpful here to pause and review Zinzendorf's background and theological influences in more detail, to contrast with Wesley's.

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[12] Tuttle, *Mysticism*, 119.

[13] Tuttle, *Mysticism*, 131.

To briefly summarize Zinzendorf's spiritual context as delineated in the previous chapter, he was raised in a Lutheran Pietistic home. He continued his spiritual education through boarding school as a youth, then on further to study under the Pietist Hermann Franke at Halle. After studying law at the University of Wittenberg to prepare for a public service career, he married and settled in Upper Lusatia as a wealthy landowner. In 1722 a precipitating event occurred for Zinzendorf, which was the arrival of Protestant refugees from Moravia seeking to create a secluded Christian community settlement away from the sins and corruption of society. He granted the religious refugees, led by layperson Christian David, a parcel of his estate, and encouraged their formation of a spiritual community they named Herrnhut. Eventually Zinzendorf became the primary architect of Herrnhut's village ordinances as well as the spiritual organization of the residents. Spener's theological description of *ecclesia ecclesiola* captivated Zinzendorf and resonated with his vision for what could be modeled at Herrnhut. Spener's own practical application of his small group discipleship model of renewal had engaged within Lutheran orthodoxy only the elite and educated church members, resulting in an exclusivity of access for anyone longing to deepen a genuine faith in Christ. Why not adapt and implement at Herrnhut a version of Spener's landmark Pietistic small group discipleship model, Zinzendorf reasoned, but instead for discipleship of ordinary, working-class citizenry? Zinzendorf's efforts to apply the ideals of the Pietist Spener to the needs of the settlers on his estate was original and unique, punctuated with creative spontaneity.[14]

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[14] J.E. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church* (London, United Kingdom: Moravian Public Office, 1909), 225.

Zinzendorf did not attend seminary and never wrote his own formal systematic theology. As an artistic thinker, his extensive writings, as well as his hymns, letters, and administrative instructions, all reveal thematic variation, shifting theological design and style changes over time. He eventually arrived at his own distinctive recipe of blended ingredients from mysticism, Pietism, Quietism, Enlightenment rationalism, and Lutheran Orthodoxy, including his original theological version of the Trinity, which was chiefly Christocentric.[15] Both the Father and the Holy Spirit of the Trinity were seen relationally and by role definition through the central lens of Christ the Son. Zinzendorf's understanding of the Trinity ultimately centered upon Christ as the husband, God as Christ's Father, and the Holy Spirit as the soul's Mother with a nurturing, caring, and teaching role.[16]

Identification with the suffering servant attribute of Christ was principal in Zinzendorf's theological emphasis. Especially, Zinzendorf incorporated this identification with Christ's suffering into the organization of small group discipleship at Herrnhut. The "suffering Christ" theological emphasis paved the way for Zinzendorf's subsequent missionary call to Herrnhut citizens for global lay evangelism. Zinzendorf's invitation was to be willing to face hardship and suffer personally in taking the gospel of Christ to a likewise suffering world.

To be clear, the subjective Pietistic core of Zinzendorf's theology was that it was a "heart religion." As Peter Vogt has summarized Zinzendorf's conviction, "The organ of

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[15] Peter Vogt, "Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760)" in *The Pietist Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth* Centuries, ed. Carter Lindberg (Newark, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008), 211-212.

[16] Vogt, "Nicholas Ludwig," 215.

faith, where the grace arising from Christ's redemptive death and a personal relationship to him is experienced, is the heart."[17] For Zinzendorf, faith consisted of the miraculous combination of the objective reality of Christ's redemptive death joined to a personal heart encounter with the living Christ. Zinzendorf explained the mechanics as Christ proactively appearing before each human soul, and if the soul is open to see and sense him in his state of crucified martyrdom, the result is immediate full assurance of faith at the heart level.[18] He referenced scriptures such as Hebrews 12:2, John 14:23, Romans 8:16, and Galatians 2:20 to support this premise, teaching that these passages validate grace flowing from Christ directly to the human soul. In fact, Zinzendorf viewed external practices of any means of grace, including Holy Communion, as legalistic approaches to potential justification by faith (salvation by works). Rather, "stillness" of the soul to passively await the gift of heart-level full assurance of faith and guidance from Christ was Zinzendorf's application of Quietism gleaned from his connection with the Philadelphian Society of the day.[19]

By way of historical and theological explanation, Quietists were so called because they advocated the pursuit of passive, loving contemplation of God without any accompanying activity.[20] More specifically, the mystical emphasis of Quietism was the search for complete inner passivity without need for additional exterior spiritual

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[17] Vogt, "Nicholas Ludwig," 213.

[18] Vogt, "Nicholas Ludwig," 213.

[19] Mark K. Olson, "The Stillness Controversy of 1740: Tradition Shaping Scripture Reading," February 18, 2020, https://wesleyscholar.com/the-stillness-controversy-of-1740-tradition-shaping-scripture-reading/.

[20] Thomas M. Lennon, *Sacrifice and Self-Interest in Seventeenth-Century France: Quietism, Jansenism, and Cartesianism* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2019), ix.

practices.[21] Early forerunners, such as Quietist Miguel de Molinos, author of *Spiritual Guide* in 1675, penned descriptions about how to stay in a state of continuous "infused prayer" that shaped both the subsequent writings and various versions of Quietism for years to follow. Molino's *Spiritual Guide* advocated annihilation of any personal will to unite with God's, passive silence in prayer without offering thanksgiving and praise, restraint from acts of love toward God or Christ (including Christian sacraments), and release of concern for anything including desire for personal holiness or even one's own salvation.[22] In its extreme forms, Quietism even allowed passive acquiescence to temptations, claiming that fulfillment of such would not result in need for repentance but rather serve as means of advancing past any exercise of personal will, on the desired pathway to merge with God's.

When Wesley traveled to Herrnhut in 1738 and had an opportunity for observation of the organization and outplay of Herrnhut's small group discipleship designed by Zinzendorf, he was deeply impressed. He was granted a copy of Herrnhut's organizational structure for discipleship and headed back to London, convinced he needed to likewise improve his own ordinances for the discipleship and structure of his Methodist movement's classes and bands. His Herrnhut visit also allowed theological dialogue with both Zinzendorf and Christian David which continued via exchange of letters going forward.

Over time Zinzendorf incorporated the passive strands of Quietism's perspective into the prayer practices of Moravian prayer gatherings elsewhere, including London's

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[21] Bernard McGinn, ed., *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism* (New York, NY: Modern Library, Random House, Inc., 2006), 502.

[22] McGinn, *The Essential,* 503-4.

Fetter Lane Society where Wesley had been involved. “Stillness” became a recommendation of Zinzendorf’s Moravian leaders for attendees who had not yet experienced genuine justification by faith at the heart level. They were encouraged to refrain from any need to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion or engage in other active means of grace, as Wesley called such practices, and to remain passively still with expectancy for Christ’s initiative of heart encounter as understood through Zinzendorf’s emerging theological shifts.

Unlike the Quietists or Zinzendorf, Wesley’s Anglican tradition understood the act of receiving Holy Communion as biblical. It was a vital and necessary venue through which God’s grace could work. Wesley believed that an assortment of proactive spiritual practices, regularly engaged, were essential to open avenues through which to encounter miraculous means of grace provided by the Holy Spirit.[23]

It can be concluded that the Fetter Lane Society thus became the stage upon which Wesley’s own theology of grace through prayer began to emerge with increasing articulation and clarity. Especially, the Quietistic “stillness” passivity substituting for prayer as a means of grace at Fetter Lane meetings became theologically problematic for Wesley. Wesley’s Anglican heritage mandated his view of the sacrament of Holy Communion as a vital participatory means of active grace (along with prayer, scripture reading, gathering of the saints, and acts of mercy) for both those seeking justification by faith and those who had already experienced it. Zinzendorf, in theological contrast, eventually released those seeking faith in Christ from spiritual obligation to take

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[23] Kevin M. Watson, *Pursuing Social Holiness: The Band Meeting in Wesley's Thought and Popular Methodist Practice* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-2.

communion, read the Bible or pray, and instead to attempt to rest fully in the internal posture of passive surrender. Zinzendorf obviated them from any need to practice any active means of grace, as Wesley strongly advocated. As concluded by Kevin M. Watson, "Wesley felt that Moravian spiritual practice overemphasized the immediate experience of God's grace through their understanding of assurance at the expense of the importance of relying on a disciplined practice of the means of grace."[24]

Wesley's journals document multiple meetings and correspondence with Moravian colleagues Bohler, Bishop Spangenberg, and Zinzendorf himself regarding this core issue. In fact, when Zinzendorf and Wesley met in person with hope to resolve their theological differences, Zinzendorf instead criticized Wesley's articulation of the sanctifying grace of "Christian Perfection." Zinzendorf re-emphasized to Wesley his theological position permeating through his leadership: that "a Christian is holy only in Christ and is as holy when first justified as years later."[25] An agreed-upon parting of ways took place between them in 1740, both theologically and in Wesley's Fetter Lane meeting attendance. Wesley moved forward as the emerging leader of the new Methodist movement, armed not only with his Anglican theological history and practices of the means of grace, but also incorporating the "heart religion" influence of the Moravians.

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[24] Watson, *Pursuing Social Holiness,* 77.

[25] Anna Marie Johnson, "Ecumenist and Controversialist: The Dual Legacy of Nikolaus Ludwig Von Zinzendorf: Ecumenist and Controversialist," *Journal of Religious History* 38, no. 2 (2014): 253, doi:10.1111/1467-9809.12025, 253.

John Wesley's Theology of Prayer as Primary Means of Grace

Today's Methodist understanding of Wesleyan grace acknowledges his well-known definitions of prevenient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace as played out through the ongoing process he called "Christian Perfection." Wesley described Christian Perfection as "loving God with all the heart, so that every evil temper is destroyed; and every thought and word and work springs from and is conducted to the end by pure love of God and our neighbor."[26]

According to the scholarship of Henry H. Knight III, Wesley also identified "General" means of grace including obedience and keeping all the commandments; "Instituted" or "Particular" means of grace, such as prayer, scripture reading, Holy Communion, fasting, and Christian Conference; and "Prudential" means of grace, such as class and band meetings, visiting the sick, and acts of mercy.[27] Of all these means of grace, however, Wesley did repeatedly name prayer as the overall primary means of grace. Next comes consideration of his specific theology of prayer, as understood through two different Wesley theologians.

Wesley's own lifelong history steeped in Anglican church doctrine and practice, his deeply-instilled "form" prayer practices taught from childhood by his parents plus the addition of ejaculatory and extemporaneous prayer, his conviction that the ecclesiological means of grace (Holy Communion and baptism) remained a non-negotiable venue for the Church's spiritual transformation, and the heart religion of the Moravians, all combined

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[26] John Wesley, 1758 Conference Minutes, quoted in R. Newton Flew, *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology* (Eugene, OR; Wipft & Stock, 2005), 326, quoted in Robert G. Tuttle, Jr, *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1989), 149.

[27] Henry H. Knight III, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life* (Metuchen, NJ & London, 1992), 5.

as the basis for his identification of prayer as the essential chief means of divine grace. Wesley maintained that "formalism," or focus only on traditional dogmatic church ordinances, was merely a cognitive framework of understanding God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Exclusive focus on these in the life of the Church would make them the end, rather than the miraculous means, of the gathered body of Christ. The Church would thus learn about who the Triune God is without developing a living relationship with God. On the other hand, Wesley also strenuously asserted that over-emphasis on "emotional enthusiasm" of a faith- seeking relationship with God, without a biblically grounded understanding of the dynamic Triune God as revealed in scripture study, formal church liturgical prayer, and historic church creeds, was seeking the end without the means.[28]

Wesley's conviction was that the Christian life is the union of scriptural knowledge about who the Triune God is together with an active, experiential relationship with the Triune God.[29] Having only knowledge about God, or having only primarily emotional experiences attributed to God, does not lead to the lived-out vibrancy of the ongoing sanctifying grace Wesley called "Christian Perfection."

Henry H. Knight III proposes that prayer as the primary means of grace was Wesley's remedy to "formalism." It was the coming together of his Anglican roots, his value for ongoing practices of the means of miraculous grace, and his synthesis of Moravian piety emphasizing the Spirit's work of justification by faith with full assurance of forgiveness. God's grace flowing through prayer connects the Church in two ways. It

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[28] Knight, *The Presence of God,* 127.

[29] Knight, *The Presence of God,* 128.

illuminates the application of scriptural knowledge of the Triune God's gift of new resurrected life of faith within, prompting reflection, repentance, and spiritual transformation. Equally operative is the grace-infused invitational beckoning forward of the Holy Spirit, welcoming and motivating our human response.[30] Prayers of both supplication and petition shift the faithful from merely inward, self-focused preoccupation seeking our own grace-empowered spiritual transformation to looking outward for the Spirit's activity and engagement. Wesley himself chided a class leader for focusing too much on personal feelings, writing, "You look inward too much, and upward too little."[31]

According to Knight, Wesley said that prayer "'is the grand means of drawing near to God'; all other means are helpful 'as they are mixed with or prepare us for this.'"[32] Prayer thus pervades the other means of grace, as both preparation and content. But prayer also pervades the Christian life itself.[33] Wesley saw prayer as the prevailing means of grace, both inviting assurance of forgiveness and also justifying grace by faith of new life in Christ. Prayer may also become the means through which God brings the transforming, sanctifying grace of discipleship into Christ's likeness he named "Christian Perfection." Further, Wesley advocated prayer even when one feels disinclined to do so,

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[30] Knight, *The Presence of God,* 169.

[31] John Wesley to Miss Bishop, February 16, 1771 in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.: Sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford* (London, United Kingdom: John Mason, 1831), 13:21.

[32] John Wesley, "Letter to Miss March" on March 9, 1760, in *The Letters of the Rev.John Wesley, A.M., Sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford by John Wesley*, quoted in Henry H. Knight III, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life* (Metuchen, NJ & London, United Kingdom; Scarecrow Press, 1992), 116.

[33] Knight, *The Presence of God,* 116.

since prayer is the chief ongoing means of grace to deepen one's relationship with God and to create receptivity to receive from God.[34]

Knight points out that Wesley's understanding of prayer as the primary means of grace incorporated both the individual's active initiative to seek God plus openness to receive God's miraculous gifts of transformation. It was this core theology of prayer as the chief means of grace that led Wesley to see inattention to the practice of prayer as the culprit causing stagnation and loss of faith in the life of a Christian.

Wesley instructed believers to include petition, confession, intercession, and thanksgiving in their practice of prayer. Additionally, Wesley named "watching" (or "watching" prayer) as a means of grace requiring extra effort. By Wesley's own definition, Christ has given us "a direction equally full and express to wait for the blessings of God in private prayer, together with a positive promise that by this means we shall obtain the request of our lips…Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, nothing doubting."[35] Wesley expanded his explanation of "watching" as both staying alert inward to (and setting aside) temptations, the foils of Satan, personal proclivities to sinfulness, and anything that would inhibit the outplay of faith, while also watching spiritually outward to notice God's will and respond to it.[36]

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[34] Knight, *The Presence of God,* 117.

[35] John Wesley, "The Means of Grace," in *The Works of John Wesley,* ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984) 1:386.

[36] Knight, *The Presence of God,* 123.

John Wesley and Trinitarian "Spiritual Respiration"

Wesley theologian Elmer M. Colyer argues that Knight's understanding of Wesley's theology of prayer is missing Wesley's crucial participatory Trinitarian dimension that helps us understand both why and how (for Wesley) prayer is a way of life.[37] Colyer points out that nowhere in Knight's commentary on Wesley's prayer as means of grace is the activity of the Holy Spirit mentioned. According to Colyer's view of Wesley's Trinitarian framework, the vibrant participatory vision captured in Wesley's own imagery of prayer as a way of life was watching and attending to the love of God the Father, through the grace of Jesus Christ, in the presence and *dunamis*,[38] or miraculous resurrection power, of the Holy Spirit. God's *dunamis* is the personal presence of God's love through Christ's grace (his entire life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension) in the power of the living Spirit. Colyer views this participatory Trinitarian spiritual respiration as what Wesley means by prayer as a way of life. Prayer is the primary means of grace that always involves "watching," or actively attending to this evangelical doxological Trinitarian spiritual respiration.[39]

In his sermon "The New Birth," Wesley emphasized this Trinitarian dynamic when describing what takes place when a person is justified by faith:

> God is continually breathing upon his soul, and his soul is breathing unto God. Grace is descending into his heart, and prayer and praise ascending to heaven. And by this intercourse between God and man, this fellowship with the Father and the Son, as by a kind of spiritual respiration, the life of God in the soul is

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[37] As explained to me by Dr. Elmer M. Colyer in an email sent on December 9, 2022.

[38] The Greek word *dunamis,* used prolifically throughout the New Testament scripture, references the supernatural power by which Jesus was miraculously resurrected and that remains active today through the Holy Spirit.

[39] As explained in Colyer email on December 9, 2022.

> sustained; and the child of God grows up, till he comes to the 'full measure of the stature of Christ.'[40]

Similarly, in his sermon "The Great Privilege of those that Are Born of God," Wesley further explained:

> It immediately and necessarily implies the continual inspiration of God's Holy Spirit; God's breathing into the soul, and the soul's breathing back what it first receives from God; a continual action of God upon the soul, the re-action of the soul upon God; an unceasing presence of God, the loving pardoning God, manifested to the heart, and perceived by faith; an unceasing return of love, praise and prayer, offering up all the thoughts of our hearts, all words of our tongues, all works of our hands, all our body, soul, and spirit, to be an holy sacrifice acceptable unto God in Christ Jesus.[41]

Donna Maltese, compiler and editor of *How to Live a life of Prayer*, cites John Wesley as proclaiming,

> The life of God in the soul of the believer immediately and necessarily implies a continual action of God upon the soul by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit and a reaction of the soul upon God by an unceasing return of love, prayer, and praise. From this, we may infer the absolute necessity of this continual reaction of the soul upon God to the continuance of the divine life in the soul. God does not continue to act upon the soul unless the soul continues to react upon God.[42]

Conclusion

Wesley's theology of prayer as the prevailing means of grace, then, depicts the proactive activity of the Trinitarian *dunamis* of the Holy Spirit when in prayer one is actively surrendered in body, mind, heart, and spirit, setting aside our temptations, distractions, and our own preferences (as per Wesley's "watching" means of prayer). This

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[40] John Wesley, "The New Birth," in *The Works of John Wesley.,* ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1985), 2:193.

[41] John Wesley, "The Great Privilege of those that Are Born of God," in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.,* ed. Thomas Jackson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 1:442.

[42] Donna K. Maltese, ed., How *to Live a Life of Prayer: Classic Christian Writers on the Divine Privilege of Prayer* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Books, 2018), Kindle location 807 of 2359.

expectantly renders one fully available, asking for God's grace not only to spiritually transform one within but also for God's grace to provide divine direction that occasions new acts of grace-filled mercy and service going forward. According to Randy L. Maddox, Wesley identified the Holy Spirit's guidance of believers as one of the Spirit's expected provisions, hastening to add (in a 1748 letter of spiritual advice to a faith seeker who had joined the Quakers) that the Spirit's guidance is "always in accordance with our rule—which is Scripture."[43]

Such a prayer posture becomes the venue for the *dunamis* of the Holy Spirit's grace to spiritually transform us within through the ongoing means of prevenient, justifying, or sanctifying grace, and to activate through us with provision of divine direction toward corresponding new expressions of grace-filled mercy and service in the world. "Conflux moments" describe occasions of our awareness that a human-divine spiritual encounter of heart-level grace has presented itself, which brings a resulting sense of grace-fueled spiritual momentum forward.[44] The project's case study, then, of training leaders and their congregations to add the practice of a "watching" prayer posture as a means of grace, asking God for the Spirit's transformation within, as well as a breakthrough prayer component requesting and watching spiritually for divine direction and grace-authored next steps, stands upon Wesley's theological foundation of prayer.

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[43] John Wesley to a Quaker believer, February 10, 1948, quoted in Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 133.

[44] Sue Nilson Kibbey, *Floodgates: Holy Momentum for a Fearless Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2016), 87-88.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

The interdisciplinary foundation framework I chose to study is the theory of community organizing. It became evident, after researching and writing the Biblical Foundations chapter, that King David used several techniques to rally and unite his soldiers twice around prayer and God's resulting guidance for victorious battle.

After considering Zinzendorf's leadership of Herrnhut in the Historical Foundations chapter, it likewise became apparent that the churchwide, hundred-year prayer chain was accomplished through his creative strategies of engagement, including a church "rally cry" of a scripture verse, team and small group accountability, scriptural study and learning through prayer "watch words," and large, organized gatherings to share stories about what was unfolding through their prayer efforts. Those of all ages, all stages of health or infirmity, and all levels of spiritual maturity were included in the grassroots prayer movement in their own community which rippled out to bring the eternally changing message of Christ to multiple other countries and then continents. Zinzendorf, the central prayer instigator of Herrnhut, was a community organizer of excellence.

A consideration of John Wesley's evolving theology of prayer as primary means of grace in the Theological Foundations chapter, with accompanying comparison and contrast to Zinzendorf's, made it clear that Wesley also utilized his own unique set of

facilitator methods to provide a framework uniting the Methodist movement in prayer that brought change. King David, Zinzendorf, and Wesley all shared application of a few of the same techniques to rally their constituencies upon prayer. Understanding the dynamics of corporate momentum they each generated led to the following interdisciplinary foundational research of community organizing.

Key principles of community organizing have been applied widely on behalf of various school, health care, and other positive reform efforts over the last several decades. While rallying and engaging a congregation for ongoing prayer is different than the goals Saul Alinsky had in mind with his original approach to community organizing, initial examination of the basic techniques and strategies of his theory of community organizing explains and adds further understanding to the historical mobilization of King David and his army, Zinzendorf and the Herrnhut prayer movement, and John Wesley's early Methodists as delineated in in the previous chapters. Learning more specifically about what excites and engages persons at the grassroots level to unite, focus, and actively work together towards a common goal contributed to the design of my project's case study assessing the training of pastors and their leaders in how to rally their congregations in ongoing breakthrough prayer for the purpose of increasing prayer discernment capacity.

The organization of this chapter unfolds as follows. The introduction acknowledges and explains community organizing as originally developed by Saul Alinsky, using his most well-known early community organizing effort as an illustration. Next comes a review of how the framework of community organizing has been viewed by scholars within scripture, the Trinitarian interplay of the Godhead, in the earthly life

and ministry of Jesus, and in the Church. After that, I summarize the core characteristics that define community organizing today and compare them with the facilitation approaches of Zinzendorf and Wesley in their grassroots prayer movements, illustrating how these linked each movement to a transcendent future picture. According to the theory of community organization, leaders who model certain aspects of facilitation can leverage and unite groups in collective decision-making discernment, help them evaluate their corporate actions and standards of behavior, determine who they want to become, and press for change as a single focus. Finally, in concluding comments I emphasize how the interdisciplinary consideration of community organizational theory informed the case study project.

Saul Alinsky

In 1909, Saul David Alinsky was born to orthodox Jewish parents in Chicago, Illinois. His chief life legacy would be as the architect and motivator of various community activist groups through his strategies of grassroots social organizing. After studying sociology and criminology at the University of Chicago, he worked as a criminologist for eight years. Alinsky later said he learned crucial organizing principles in that role from shadowing crime mobs, working at the state penitentiary, and interacting with juvenile delinquents.[1] He created what came to be called the Alinsky ideology and Alinsky concepts of mass organization for power,[2] intended to provide the framework for

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[1] *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Saul Alinsky," October 12, 2022, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saul-Alinsky.

[2] Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1989), 197.

those marginalized and oppressed to collectively regain their own power for leveraging change.

Alinsky's first effort applying his approach was in 1939 in working-class Chicago next to the Stockyards. This section of Chicago on the Near South Side called Back of the Yards was considered by most sociologists of that day as an impossibly disordered, crime-filled slum. Populated by a widely diverse immigrant community, the area was deeply and aggressively divided along racial and ethnic lines. As per his ideological structure, Alinsky took an initial step towards founding a democratic organization of the community where residents could not only safely share their concerns, but also unite for action. He formed the "Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council." Their motto (and repeated mantra) became, "We the people will work out our own destiny."[3] The Council's first effort was to unite their residents' voices and actions to successfully demand and win workplace concessions from their employers (local meatpackers). Alinsky believed in the importance of choosing a target, which he defined as a person or an organization that has the power to make decisions and cause change.[4]

According to George A. Hillery's research, communities are defined by three ingredients: interpersonal networks which provide support and relationships, shared activities and sentiments, and a common location of residency.[5] All three of these

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[3] Robert Slayton, "Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council," in *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, 2005, https://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/100.html.

[4] Marty Martinson and Celina Su, "Contrasting Organizational Approaches," in *Community Organizing and Community Building for Health and Welfare,* 3rd ed., ed. Meredith Minkler (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 61.

[5] George A. Hillery, Jr., "Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement," *Rural Sociology* 20, (June 1955): 111.

ingredients did indeed exist there. Amazingly, despite the various clashes of ethnic and culture long inherent in the Back of the Yards, Alinsky's community organizing strategy productively united this neighborhood and eventually even more broadly united it together with local labor unions and the Roman Catholic Church to successfully partner for common goals of justice, economics, right to fair living conditions, and other accomplishments. The Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council still exists today, with a focus on employment assistance and ongoing economic improvements according to its own website.[6]

Alinsky's controversial career later included numerous community organizing efforts of the marginalized, impoverished, and oppressed across the country, and the establishment of a training institute for aspiring community organizers, called the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), which continues to operate across the United States, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom.[7] From the 1960's onward, his strategies have been used by everyone from college students to social activists to advocate for their agendas. He authored *Reveille for Radicals* in 1946 and *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals* originally published in 1971. Community organizing today is considered to be the proactivity of a group of people who organize at the grassroots level in order to grapple with and resolve shared community problems via democratic engagement.[8] Alinsky's methodology emphasizes what has been called the unity-in-

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[6] "Mission," Back of the Yards Neighborhood Counsil, accessed September 6, 2024, https://bync.org/mission.

[7] Martinson and Su, "Contrasting Organizational Approaches," 62.

[8] Hak Joon Lee, *God and Community Organizing: A Covenantal Approach* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020), 142.

diversity principle, synchronizing the diverse interests among those involved while simultaneously establishing mutual solidarity around a shared goal or purpose.[9] Another crucial aspect is that community organizing aims to inform, equip, and set up the people to act on their own behalf to cross over from where they are to where they would like to be or who they would like to become. Together, believed Alinsky, the people (if organized) have power to press forward from where they are into a better future of justice and opportunity. A hallmark of Alinsky's emphasis was on "multi-issue organizing," which drew together groups of persons with varying needs and problems around their shared desire for a mutual good. This, according to Alinsky, creates ongoing sustainability to the overall organization and its willingness to continue to move forward together.[10]

Loretta Pyles maintains that the primary focus in community organizing is recognizing, including, and building what she refers to as the "base," which are those who are impacted or affected.[11] The "base," she insists, must be interwoven with the core moral values and aspirations of empowerment, accountability, relationship, and transformation.[12] Veteran community organizer Maria Avila sees the four essential practices inherent in fruitful community organizing as "one-on-one meetings, creating a

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[9] Lee, *God and Community,* 142.

[10] Lee, *God and Community,* 152.

[11] Loretta Pyles, *Progressive Community Organizing: Transformative Practice in a Globalizing World,* 3rd ed. (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2020), 142, https://doi-org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/10.4324/9780429294075.

[12] Pyles, *Progressive Community*, 143.

collective of leaders, analyzing power dynamics, and ongoing critical reflection."[13] Robert Slayton's analysis of Alinsky's original Back of the Yards community organizing concludes that "because the residents established the limits of their personal freedom, the lessons they learned in doing so became their own, part of their fundamental attitude towards life."[14]

In *Rules for Radicals*, Alinsky named qualities of an ideal community organizer. They include first a compulsive, limitless curiosity, questioning the "why" of current norms and behaviors, looking for new patterns, and asking new questions. Second, effective community organizers have irreverence, meaning that, for them, no current status quo is sacred and that stirring unrest toward the status quo is positive. According to Alinsky, "The function of an organizer is to raise questions that agitate, that break through the accepted pattern."[15]

The third quality is an imagination that allows one not only to imagine into the other's shoes, but also motivates toward tactics and action for new solutions.[16] This quality is not unlike more recent research on effective organizational executive leaders, who multiply leadership by inspiring others to lead within the organization.[17] The fourth is a sense of humor, which Alinsky believes essential to keep perspective of reality and

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[13] Maria Avila, Michael Gecan, and Scott J. Peters, *Transformative Civic Engagement through Community Organizing* (Bloomfield, NJ: Stylus Publishing, 2017), 20, eBook Collection (EBSCOhost).

[14] Robert A. Slayton, *Back of the Yards: The Making of a Local Democracy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 225.

15 Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals,* 72.

[16] Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals,* 72.

[17] Joseph A. Allen, ed., *The Cambridge Handbook of Organizational Community Engagement and Outreach* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 16.

oneself, refusing to see any current limitation as a permanent given. He named the quality of "a bit of blurred vision of a better world" [18] that allows a community organizer to stay aware that the specific current work is part of a far greater landscape with many others working for good. Finally, the last three essential qualities of an effective community organizer, according to Alinsky, are an organized personality that allows one to be comfortable in disorganized scenarios, thus taking advantage of leveraging surrounding multiple agendas toward the ultimate goal; a healthy ego that manifests as self-confidence in doing what needs to be done; and a free and unfettered open mind, to invent the new out of the old.[19] Wrote Alinsky,

> This is the basic difference between the leader and the organizer. The leader goes on to build power to fulfill his desires, to hold and wield the power for purposes both social and personal. He wants power himself. The organizer finds his goal in creation of power for others to use.[20]

Thus far in consideration of community organizing, Hillery's three elements already mentioned that define communities (interpersonal networks which provide support and relationships, shared activities and sentiments, and a common location of residency) were all present for King David and his army, for Zinzendorf and Herrnhut, and for Wesley and his earliest Methodist classes and bands. Alinsky's community organizational centerpiece, an environment in which community members could safely share feelings, emotions, concerns and hopes, was also maintained by Zinzendorf in his *Bunde,* or small discipleship bands, at Herrnhut and in Wesley's classes and bands. In the passage studied as my biblical foundation, the Biblical writer did not include a

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[18] Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals,* 76

[19] Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals,* 78.

[20] Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals,* 80.

description of the atmosphere David created for the gatherings of his army to seek God's guidance. However, the Davidic Psalms reflect David's openness to expressing his anger, disappointment, discouragement, fears, and longings when praying. One could conclude the likelihood that in corporate prayer with his army, a similarly open and honest environment for confession and expressions of supplication would have also been offered.

The eight characteristics of effective community organizers identified by Alinsky can be recognized in the leadership of King David, Zinzendorf, and Wesley to varying degrees, depending upon which time periods within their leadership careers. Missing completely from Alinsky's foundational community organizing theory, however, is the role of God and prayer. Next will come examination of scholars and researchers who have done work to connect the concepts of community organizing to themes of the Biblical narrative.

Scripture and Community Organizing Theory

Hak Yoon Lee reasons convincingly that God is Godself the consummate model of a community organizer. The God of Christianity continuously seeks to organize creation into shalom community.[21] Lee recognizes the scriptural paradigm of community organizing through the lens of the doctrine of the Trinity, with each person of the Godhead eternally contributing via a unique interactive role. Lee describes God the

[21] Lee, *God and Community,* 17.

Father giving order, God the Son providing form, and God the Holy Spirit as providing effect or power uniting the whole, while preserving each of their distinctiveness.[22]

Just as important, observes Lee, is seeing the theme of covenant throughout the entirety of both the Old and New Testaments and its essentiality to understanding a biblical picture of community organizing. Not only does the Trinity actively covenant with Itself as three in one, but also God initiates covenantal relationship with God's people via an overarching and redemptive theme of the scriptural narrative.[23] Walter Brueggemann hints at Lee's claim by suggesting that rather than only considering the Old Testament's theological interpretation of community among the people of Israel, for example, a more realistic dimension is the appreciation of the people's bond through intolerable situations of injustice and oppression. This shared bond brought solidarity in seeking and expecting God's covenantal provisions of provision, victory, and eventual triumph of God's reign on earth.[24] George Mendenhall, in this regard, has additionally pointed out that the largest social organization in the last half of ancient Near Eastern history was the twelve tribes of Israel.[25] God's covenantal design of relationship within grassroots community to foster spiritual growth, individual transformation, leadership, and corporate motivation to press for justice and peace all reflect the general principles found today in community organizing theory.

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[22] Lee, *God and Community,* 20.

[23] Lee, *God and Community,* 21.

[24] Norman K. Gottwald and Richard A. Horsley, eds., *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 203.

[25] George E. Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 175.

Lee's analysis provides specific examples from the Bible, including the New Testament covenantal overture by God through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, to bring reconciliation and new life to all people.[26] Out of that covenant was birthed the Church, a dynamic covenant community organized and empowered by the miraculous interaction of the Trinity in a continual process of transformation through instruction, fellowship, prayer, and acts of mercy and shalom across the world.[27] Communication, both with God through prayer individually and collectively, as well as honest communication among the people in covenant community, plays a vital role. This brings awareness of direction, clarity of needs, and opportunity for responsiveness. Charles Fredrickson has referred to this as the "three great listenings: listening to God, listening to one another in a congregation, and listening to neighbors in a community."[28]

Lee depicts Jesus as the organizer of all God's people through the Jewish understanding of the Sinai Covenant renewal. The Jews of Jesus' day viewed their history and experiences in light of the Exodus narrative. They hoped for the fulfillment of the covenantal promise of liberation from foreign oppression through God's miraculous action and final triumph. The scattered Jewish communities would be reunited into a new community of God's people and restored through God's power and redemption.

Jesus' methodology of community organizing after his baptism emerged through connecting first with the grassroots population of Galilee. He taught user-friendly

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[26] Lee, *God and Community,* 27.

[27] Lee, *God and Community,* 28.

[28] Charles Fredrickson et al., *Faith-Based Organizing: A Congregational Planning Resource for Addressing Poverty* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2021), 24, eBook Collection (Digital Theological Library).

practical concepts for daily life, siding with the weak and disenfranchised rather than the powerful. He brought together individuals to form gatherings of safe space for sharing, naming of concerns, and building relationships. He collected an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse group of people around a common table, bringing a sense of value and worth to each. He healed and taught, uniting the variety of agendas within the community for a common hope.[29] Through the resurrection, God followed God's own scriptural pattern of renewing covenant with God's people along with a new expression of justice, community, and Holy Spirit empowerment.

More contemporary recognition and application of community organizing theory related to the Church as the body of Christ has emerged during the last two decades, with the core relevance remaining consistent. As Susan Engh points out from her research, churches that introduce community organizational principles typically start with occasions for collective listening gatherings. These are capable of inviting a deeper level of transparent sharing and interaction than may have typically happened previously throughout the congregation.[30]

Additionally, as coauthors Tim Conder and Daniel Rhodes have described it, "Hope is essential to organizing bodies; it informs the very identities of these communities and their leaders."[31] When the Church, or its individual congregations, centralize sharing hope as their common good or goal (hope for justice, for social reform,

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[29] Lee, *God and Community,* 80.

[30] Susan Engh, *Women's Work: The Transformational Power of Faith-Based Community Organizing* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2019), 37, ProQuest eBook Central.

[31] Tim Conder and Daniel Rhodes, *Organizing Church: Grassroots Practices for Embodying Change in Your Congregation, Your Community, and Our World* (Ashland, OH: Chalice Press, 2017), 88, ProQuest eBook Central.

for spiritual transformation or other) and then exercise organizing practices accordingly, the result is not a stagnant church community. Rather, they insist, it produces a "context of perpetual dynamism" evidenced by continually changing leaders and individuals, with changing values and behaviors.[32] This is appropriate when considering the activity and miraculous power of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, alive through God the Father's covenantal relationship with God's people through the resurrection of Jesus the Son. Conder and Rhodes define the Church as "the people of God gathered in the presence of Christ to do God's business by the power of the Holy Spirit."[33] Aaron Stauffer adds: "By figuring sacred values, mutual recognition, and the ethical life of Spirit in the relational meeting we gain epistemic, practical, and spiritual insight into the practice itself."[34]

That said, Conder and Rhodes identify six practices that distinctively define the Church as a grassroots organization: (a) baptism (through which all previous allegiances of any kind are replaced by the freedom and kinship of new life in Christ); (b) the acknowledgement and deployment of the spiritual gifts of each person; (c) the *koinonia* of Christ's shared table of love and community with each other; (d) solidarity with the marginalized and the poor; (e) scripture study and formation to further equip the people for the work of Christ in the world; and (f) the practice of forgiveness that leads to reconciliation.[35] The importance of power for a grassroots community of the Church,

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[32] Conder and Rhodes, *Organizing Church,* 89.

[33] Conder and Rhodes, *Organizing Church,* 22.

[34] Aaron Stauffer, *Listening to the Spirit: The Radical Social Gospel, Sacred Value, and Broad-Based Community Organizing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 115.

[35] Conder and Rhodes, *Organizing Church,* 23-27.

emphasize Conder and Rhodes, differs from the establishment of the type of power that Alinsky's original community organizing theory advocated. The organizing for power of a church community permits it to fill its mission of shalom, of peace and justice in the world around it through the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.[36]

Dennis A Jacobson provides a simpler definition by stating that "Christian community must be distinctive from generic community, which could be defined as a group of people who understand that their destiny is intertwined."[37] Specifically, Jacobson distinguishes that a Christian community is "acting for the realm of God."[38] Richard L. Wood and Brad R. Felton's research concludes faith communities that include prayer practices and religious-framing of challenges and issues function at the heart of most community organizing efforts today.[39]

Engagement and Application of Community Organizing Theory: Conclusions

To conclude, I will draw together specific methods and practices successfully deployed by community organizers of varying contexts, including those described from the biblical narrative and from the Church as covenantal community. I will, along the way, also provide my conclusions about both Zinzendorf's and Wesley's facilitation of community organizing. I have already named what can be assessed about King David's facilitating leadership previously, given the informational limitation of specifics from the

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[36] Conder and Rhodes, *Organizing Church,* 33.

[37] Dennis A. Jacobsen, *Doing Justice: Congregations and Community Organizing*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 127.

[38] Jacobsen, *Doing Justice,* 129.

[39] Richard L. Wood and Brad R. Fulton, *A Shared Future: Faith-Based Organizing for Racial Equity and Ethical Democracy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 26.

biblical passage studied. Here I will focus on community organizational strategies used by Zinzendorf and Wesley.

I begin by returning to Alinsky's framework. Fruitful grassroots organization of persons united around an identified common good or purpose, believed Alinsky, forms around three non-negotiable ingredients. Each of these, in his experience, were the responsibility of the community organizer to instigate.

The first ingredient, according to Alinsky, is individual meetings between the organizer and key persons in the constituency to develop a trust relationship, conveying the value of each person's stories, opinions, hopes, dreams, and talents. Conversation and communication between the community organizer and the grassroots participants are key.[40] The organizer's role is not to assume all power and authority but rather to be an active facilitator building personal and interpersonal connections illuminating commonalities. These might include frustrations, fears, failures, anger, or needs shared by others, voiced honestly in a safe atmosphere. The community organizer's language is important, first listening and then articulating what is heard in such ways that other community members can relate and connect through their own feelings and experiences. Alinsky, as a point of emphasis regarding effective communication, quoted Mark Twain as once saying, "The difference between the right word and the almost-right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug."[41]

As described in the Historical Foundations chapter, this first ingredient was inherent in Zinzendorf's facilitation of the new community of Herrnhut in its early years,

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[40] Lee, *God and Community,* 153.

[41] Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals,* 49.

as it struggled with diversity of culture and theological differences among its initial refugee population. Zinzendorf invested time and built personal trust relationships with the Herrnhut inhabitants, establishing a home to live among them, and holding collaborative town hall meetings to openly discuss and together discover solutions to the new community's operational ordinances. He also became deeply involved alongside in them in worship and discipleship, eventually facilitating their leaders as they together designed small groups for scripture, practical application to Christian living, and prayer.

Wesley's facilitation of grassroots organizing in this aspect was clearly demonstrated by his prolific letter writing and personal meetings with individuals that he documented through his personal journals, much of which is still on accessible record today. He listened, responded, affirmed gifts and talents, stoked spiritual discontent for pursuit of a deeper faith pursuit, and spiritually walked alongside countless persons who ended up in his classes, bands, meetings and who became facilitating community organizers themselves in the growing Methodist movement.

The second practice identified by Alinsky was providing education for members of the grassroots organization to help them begin practical, problem-solving education to help them grow in awareness, equip them with their own skills of communication and leadership, and increase their own confidence to advocate together for change. This is not an education based in abstract theory. Rather, this type of education is immediately applicable to real-life situations, enabling people to see new solutions that they can actualize.[42]

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[42] Lee, *God and Community,* 154.

Zinzendorf and his wife exercised this second practice by making scriptural education even more user-friendly to the entire community by their development of a daily "watch word" of verses from the Bible. These were routinely distributed for use by every citizen, thus ensuring that the entire community was learning together. The watchwords were discussed at the small group bands, classes, and choirs as community members applied their spiritual insights to daily Christian living.

John Wesley and his brother Charles accomplished this brilliantly for their grassroots organization of Methodists via the plentiful hymnody they created, which was easily learned, sung, and remembered as those in their grassroots repeatedly sang them together. The hymns were an effective tool of practical self-education about faith, scripture, and the activity of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Finally, according to Alinsky, the third ingredient is the necessity of people's understanding that their grassroots organization is part of a bigger coalition containing a growing number of other organizations all sharing the same common good or goal. The respective motivating problems and agendas of each organization might differ, but the overall common good or goal is shared. This provides those at the grassroots level an awareness of, and potential opportunity for, eventual collaboration of power on a much broader scale.[43] According to the research of Jim Casey, grassroots organizational movements that persevere and prevail have had significant resiliency, not depending upon a single person or connection.[44]

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[43] Lee, *God and Community,* 155.

[44] P. Gabrielle Foreman, Jim Casey, and Sarah Lynn Patterson, eds. *The Colored Conventions Movement: Black Organizing in the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 280.

Zinzendorf's community organizing strategy centered on prayer for surrender to God's outward-focused call kept this bigger "coalition" picture continually before his grassroots organization. As more individuals responded and ventured to parts unknown to facilitate similar grassroots faith-based organizational movements, Zinzendorf shared the stories of these victories and fruitfulness widely. This perennially kept fresh the sense of a larger network working across many like-hearted efforts. Wesley's letter writing, preaching, and ceaseless travel to encourage his growing Methodist grassroots community organizational pockets were the lifeblood of how he created a sense of all as part of a movement of God's grace.

Lee Staples, community organizational theory researcher, emphasizes in his work that an additional potent nonnegotiable for a grassroots organization is that organic leadership will emerge from within, rather than top-down from an outside authority.[45] This was inherent in Alinsky's model. Interestingly, Zinzendorf's model instead assigned authority-figure leaders for its bands and choirs to whom members were spiritually accountable and who gave each member feedback on Christian behavior, shortcomings, needs for repentance and requests for forgiveness. However, Wesley's bands functioned, as Staples has advocated, with group shared accountability rather than accountability to an assigned authority figure.

Specifically, Staples points out that grassroots community organizations are typically one (or more) of six distinct types. They may be anchored in "turf," or kinship, stemming from sharing a particular physical area that poses problems and needs

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[45] Lee Staples, *Roots to Power: A Manual for Grassroots Organizing*, 3rd ed. (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2016), 2.

improvements. They may be "issue-based," formed around a concern of what might be a diversity of persons who all desire to address, change, or correct the same issue. They may be "faith-based," organizing to bring faith values and ideals to scenarios of social justice or oppression. They may be grassroots community organizations of "identity" to press for change regarding discrimination or marginalization. "Shared experience" can also be a motivation to form a grassroots community organization, such as age, incarceration, or homelessness. As in Alinsky's prototype community organization in the Back of the Yard neighborhood, a "work-related" issue was the initial motivator for its formation.[46]

Over Zinzendorf's Herrnhut leadership season, his progression through more than one of these types of community organizing became evident. He began with grassroots organizing of Herrnhut around "turf," the physical reality of the small new town they were forming and all shared, to address the issues arising. Later his grassroots organizing became primarily "faith based" with a shared goal to press for spiritually transformed lives of their own. This expanded to include Zinzendorf's increasing evangelistic focus on bringing Christ's transforming message and discipleship internationally. Herrnhut sent out lay missionaries to facilitate grassroots organizations using Zinzendorf's prototype across the known world. Wesley's grassroots organizing was of the "faith-based" type, uniting a wide array of persons in all stages of faith development for methods of discipleship to progress from justification by faith into active spiritual maturity (the process of sanctifying grace, or "Christian Perfection").

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[46] Staples, *Roots to Power,* 4-7.

In Alinsky's original community organizing approach he also incorporated a constant, repeatable motto or mantra (for the Back Yard Council, it was "We the People Will Work Out Our Destiny") that became a rally cry for the grassroots community. Zinzendorf modeled this by introducing an Old Testament scripture verse to the Herrnhut community as their spiritual rally cry to prayer. He repeated it constantly, and the community members eventually did as well to one another. John Wesley leveraged the use of a repeated rally cry —prayer is God's prevailing means of grace—which he ceaselessly emphasized in his preaching, teaching, letters, and ordinances and written guidelines for bands, classes, and meetings.

Finally, Alinsky helped facilitate the people's identification of a "target" person who had the power to make decisions for change. It was toward this target that the facilitator helped the people organize and mobilize to press in unison to advocate for change and fresh solutions.

It is my concluding contention that, as grassroots community organizers of the faithful, both Zinzendorf and Wesley centralized God as the "target" of their organizing, the One with power to enact decisions and outplays for miraculous change. Both utilized united, ongoing prayer asking and pressing God (as their "target") for forgiveness, transformation, and divine resourcing and guidance in their respective grassroots organizations as the continuous fuel. This prayer was the catalyst that shaped and formed internal organizational dynamics and unleashed the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit working towards peace, healing, justice, and shalom in the world through both their individual lives and through everyone corporately. Finally, as Terry Allen Moe depicts, community organizers like these are those "rare and uniquely gifted for thinking and

acting outside the box. They question. They agitate. They do not accept all the rules. In some ways, they literally live in another world, the world that ought to be."[47]

[47] Terry Allen Moe and Susan Engh, *The Bush Still Burns: How Spirituality and Organizing Transformed a Pastor and Congregation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2021), 23.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

During my vocational ministry season as a trainer, accompanying many congregations of all sizes and settings as each has sought a new season of renewal and spiritual vitality, I have desired to equip pastors and their church leaders to move prayer for discernment of new possibilities and Holy-Spirit-birthed breakthroughs to the midst of congregational focus. My doctoral biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary research has added rich learnings, foundational enhancements, and applicable methodologies to what I have named a "Breakthrough Prayer Initiative (BTP) training."

My current ministry context is United Theological Seminary, where I am the director of the Bishop Bruce Ough Innovation Center. The identified problem, once again, is that currently, United offers no complimentary optional training for its students to equip them to launch and fuel congregation-wide prayer to corporately discern God's divine guidance and new possibilities, increasing prayer discernment capacity. Influenced by my experiences and research, for my doctoral project I completed a case study of a congregation's pastor and leaders who attended a BTP training I led through the Innovation Center in spring 2023.

My hypothesis was that if this BTP training were attended and then implemented by a congregation's pastor and key leaders, their church would gain collective prayer

discernment capacity. The results of the case study could then be used to evaluate the BTP training as a potential complimentary option made available to all United students through the Innovation Center. If efficacy of the training could be established through the case study, viable potential would have been verified for every present and future United Theological Seminary student to receive the same training option. They would then acquire the skills for launching, leading, and sustaining an organic churchwide prayer movement in their local church or ministry settings, enhancing their United educational enrichment. This chapter provides the project analysis of the case study and its results, which did verify the efficacy of the BTP training. I will endeavor to highlight from each of the previous chapters the most strategic and illuminating insights I gained along with explanations of the unique ways they informed the BTP training and thus the case study project.

My Biblical Foundations chapter centered upon 2 Samuel 5:17-25. The biblical narrative's placement of this scriptural report emphasizes the importance of prayer to David's leadership. The passage reveals a two-step pattern in David's practical prayer leadership. First, when facing a challenge, David turned to God to seek divine direction before acting, rallying his troops to join him in a secluded place for prayer and spiritual listening. After prayerfully discerning God's next steps, David led his troops accordingly and achieved victory. Speaking ("calling out") the breakthroughs or victories of God and naming them ("God of breakthrough," as the example in the selected text) built spiritual confidence among his followers. This also established convenient handholds for telling stories of God's miraculous victories, fueling future momentum for the practice of prayer inquiry asking God's guidance. Finally, the concept of "Deference versus Difference" in

leadership I noted in my Biblical Foundations chapter also stands out as a key takeaway for spiritual leaders as they might ideally respond to prayer's guidance. Deference to God's prayer-discerned direction, rather than prioritizing one's own personal differing priorities, is crucial when spiritually leading others forward.

As described in my Historical Foundations chapter, Herrnhut's specific efforts to create a spiritual movement that encouraged and supported the practice of unbroken prayer across a century also offered concrete lessons that richly enhanced the BTP training. Zinzendorf's signature use of a short scripture as a repeated prayer mantra (prayer hold) across the Herrnhut community to motivate its prayer focus forward was significant. Herrnhut's coalescence into prayer teams that were scheduled on shifts around the clock kept the central focus on the practice of ongoing corporate prayer. Herrnhut's weekly large group meetings for sharing updates of prayer requests and to tell stories of answered prayers contributed to collective motivation generated by God's miraculous responses. The regular all-community prayer gatherings held to pray together in concert, plus the outward-focused evangelistic spiritual surrender and openness to God's call, and to respond, are all practices Herrnhut developed for what turned out to be transformative community prayer momentum and spiritual transformation.

To summarize, themes in the historical foundations examination as practically applicable to the BTP training were that the wholehearted "green and growing" spiritual vitality with personal prayer commitment of the leadership is essential; that a short unified scripture used as a collective prayer to be repeated ongoing is a vehicle inviting God's Spirit to respond; and that an outwardly-focused intent for corporate prayer is necessary to instigate the constituency to become a movement. A final invaluable new

historical awareness I gained, and added into the BTP training's content, is that it is vital to engage and cultivate the constituency's prayer life across all ages, not only among adults. In fact, it would be possible to argue from the historical legacy of Herrnhut that first cultivating the active, collective prayer lives of the children within a generationally diverse constituency may be the top initial priority that then, like the first in a row of dominoes, will trigger active prayer practices through the whole.

In my Theological Foundations chapter, I researched and considered the emergence of Wesley's theological understanding that prayer is the prevailing means of grace. In genuine prayer, according to Wesley, one is actively surrendered in body, mind, heart, and spirit and sets aside temptations, distractions, and one's own preferences (as per Wesley's "watching" prayer). Thus, one who is praying is expectantly rendered fully available to ask for God's grace not only to spiritually transform within, but also for God's grace to provide divine direction that occasions new acts of grace-filled mercy and service without.

Such a prayer posture becomes the venue for the *dunamis* of the Holy Spirit's grace to work inwardly through the ongoing means of prevenient, justifying, or sanctifying grace, and to activate outwardly with provision of divine direction toward corresponding new expressions of next steps and new possibilities for Christ in the world. One central truth I gleaned to emphasize in the BTP training is to clarify for participants an understanding of Wesley's surrendered prayer posture of listening, which is both conducive for the Holy Spirit to address our own inward transformation, as well as for the Holy Spirit to provide divine direction outward and forward.

The study of Wesley's theological foundation of prayer, then, clarified and informed the essential premise of the BTP training itself: training leaders and their congregations to add the practice of a "watching" prayer posture as a means of grace, asking God for the Spirit's transformation within as well as adding a breakthrough prayer component requesting and watching spiritually for divine direction and grace-authored next steps.

The Interdisciplinary Foundations Chapter articulated and unpacked the theory of community organizing. It became evident to me, after first researching and writing my biblical foundations research, that King David used intentional facilitating techniques to rally and unite his soldiers around him in his prayer and God's resulting guidance for victorious battle. David twice repeated his pattern of these techniques for God's guidance in the selected Old Testament passage I studied.

After consideration of Zinzendorf's leadership of Herrnhut in my historical foundations research, I recognized that the churchwide unbroken prayer chain for over 100 years was accomplished through his creative and careful strategies of engagement, a church "rally cry" of a scripture verse that was continuously repeated, team and small group accountability, scriptural study and learning through prayer "watch words," and large, organized gatherings to share exciting stories about what was unfolding through their prayer efforts. Those of all ages and all stages of health or infirmity, and all levels of spiritual maturity, were included and engaged in what became a mobilized grassroots prayer movement in their own community that rippled out to bring the eternally changing message of Christ to multiple other countries and then continents.

After considering John Wesley's evolving theology of prayer as the prevailing means of grace in my theological foundations research, with accompanying comparison and contrast to Zinzendorf's, I recognized that Wesley also utilized his own unique set of facilitator methods to provide a framework uniting the Methodist movement in prayer that brought change. King David, Zinzendorf, and Wesley all shared application of a few of the same techniques to rally their constituencies to collective, ongoing prayer as well as some specific to their respective settings and goals.

The "nuts and bolts" strategies of mobilizing groups of people to unite around a common cause for change was what led me to identify community organization theory as a relevant interdisciplinary topic to explore. This dimension of study and learning was of invaluable assistance as I have ensured that replicable community organizing practices are included, with relevant application, within the BTP training's content.

Methodology

For my project, I designed and completed a case study with a congregation whose pastor and church leaders attended, and then afterwards implemented, a BTP training I provided in February 2023. The congregation I invited to participate in the case study was Knightstown United Methodist Church in Knightstown, Indiana. I selected and invited this church to the case study for specific reasons, which are as follows.

Online Training

To gain learnings about the efficacy of the BTP training's adequacy to equip attendees to then implement a congregation-wide prayer initiative at their church

resulting in increased capacity to discern God's responses, I chose to identify a pastor and leaders who together had attended a three-hour Zoom online live version of the training. I have conducted BTP trainings both in person and online via Zoom. For this case study, I wanted to research a church whose pastor and leaders had attended a virtual version of the training to help determine whether the live virtual format was effective. It would also prevent any extra interaction during an in-person training between the facilitator and the attendees from impacting the results. Additionally, a potential complimentary BTP training offered periodically through the Innovation Center for United's students would be offered in live virtual format.

Size and Setting of Church

According to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research's "Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations" study,[1] in spring 2023 the median worship attendance of a Christian congregation in America was sixty persons. For the case study, I selected a church that averaged approximately this number in weekly Sunday worship services. This allowed me to investigate the training's impact within an average-sized congregation, thus eliminating presumption that a congregation wide BTP Initiative might only bring engagement within a numerically larger congregation.

Knightstown Church sits in the town of Knightstown, Indiana, which according to the latest U.S. census has a population of 2,140.[2] Although larger metropolitan areas are

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[1] Hartford Institute for Religion, *Back to Normal? The Mixed Messages of Congregational Recovery Coming out of the Pandemic*, uploaded August 2023, https://www.covidreligionresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Epic-4-2.pdf.

[2] United States Census Bureau, *2020 Decennial Census,* https://www.census.gov/search-results.html?searchType=web&cssp=SERP&q=Knightstown%20town,%20Indiana.

within comfortable driving distance, Knightstown exists as its own suburban community with schools, industry, and health care. The congregation itself was established in the mid-1800's and today describes itself as a "family friendly church with a mixture of generations."[3] The church's smaller-town setting, long history, and variety of ages among its attendees ensured that the case study would feature a church with demographics to which many other pastors and church leaders could relate.

Context of Recent Congregational Transition

I felt confident that Knightstown Church, as part of The United Methodist Church denomination, had likely experienced a level of congregational dissonance and potential conflict arising from the denomination's recent disagreements and resultant membership disaffiliations. Likewise, I recognized that additional transition and change would have unfolded due to the COVID season that preceded the BTP training its pastor and leaders attended. Knightstown Church had experienced multiple pastoral appointment changes in the prior several years as well. For the case study, Knightstown Church's experience of transition and change was a useful attribute because it would reveal whether a congregation, despite navigating active transitions or their aftermaths, could be favorably impacted and assisted by the training.

[3] "Knightstown United Methodist Church," Find a Church, United Methodist Church, accessed August 31, 2024, https://www.umc.org/en/find-a-church/church/?id=55440.

Pastor Plus Laity Team of Five

My own subjective observations as a trainer, working to assist congregations to move prayer to the center of church life, have given me the opportunity to recognize that such trainings appear to have a more significant outplay instigating a congregational prayer movement when the pastor plus a minimum of five lay leaders from the church attend such a training together. I've noticed that they appear to return to the church with shared inspiration and enthusiasm for prayer, shared comprehension of implementation steps to take, and shared ideas for how to generate congregational prayer momentum. Knightstown Church had their pastor plus five lay leaders to attend the February 2023 BTP Zoom training, thus allowing the case study to potentially verify the usefulness of this size and makeup of pastor plus leaders' attendance afterwards for the training's implementation phase. United students attending a complimentary BTP training could be invited to bring along a team of at least five lay leaders from their ministry setting as well.

Pastor's Attendance at the Training

I've also observed that when the pastor attends together with their church leaders, ongoing impetus afterwards is sustained more fruitfully. When lay leaders attend a training without their pastor, I've noticed that the implementation afterwards may be a struggle. Since the Knightstown team attending the training included the pastor, the case study could potentially verify the value of the pastor's prayer leadership during implementation.

Minimum One Year to Implement, Following the Training

Knightstown Church attended their BTP training approximately twelve months prior to the start of the case study. The pastor plus the leadership team members who attended thus had had one year to implement their equipping from the training and to continue to fuel the congregation's BTP momentum. This set up an adequate time frame as context for the case study to assess efficacy of the training's implementation.

Format and Content of BTP Training

Before describing the methods of data collection for the case study, first I will clarify the format and content of the actual three-hour BTP training that the pastor and team of five leaders attended via Zoom. The United Methodist Indiana Conference sent out a conference-wide invitation through direct emails and conference e-letters for the BTP training I led on Saturday, February 4, 2023. The Knightstown Church team was one of multiple church teams gathered at an area host church for the virtual live training. Attendees watched the training via Zoom on a large monitor in the meeting room. Each church's team sat at individual tables, which facilitated their discussion periodically throughout the training.

Each individual in attendance at the training received a printed participant's outline, which is included as Appendix A, for potential notetaking and recording of the church team's implementation ideas and plans post-training. The outline included specific application questions to be used following the training to assist with implementation with each team's respective church or ministry. The BTP training itself was divided into four sessions, plus a final segment of time intended for church teams to

discuss and identify their initial first step of implementing a BTP Initiative across their congregations immediately (to capitalize on their new inspiration and spiritual momentum for prayer). Participants also had opportunity to ask me (the trainer) questions after each of the training's sessions.

The BTP training's four session titles, plus the content's Foundations research emphases, are named below:

1. What is a Breakthrough Prayer Initiative? (Historical and Theological Foundations for Breakthrough Prayer)
2. Types of "Breakthrough Prayer" – and Removing Prayer Roadblocks (Biblical Foundations for Breakthrough Prayer)
3. Getting Started: Crafting and Launching a Breakthrough Prayer (Community Organizing strategies from Historical and Interdisciplinary Foundations)
4. Adding Ongoing Breakthrough Prayer Momentum to Dimensions of Congregational Life (Examples and ideas how to unite and rally churchwide breakthrough prayer)

The PowerPoint slides that supported each session may be found in Appendix B.

Qualitative data collection for my case study on the efficacy of the BTP training began with a confidential, anonymous, detailed online survey completed by the pastor and the five leaders who attended the training (hereafter P/L survey). This was followed by a confidential, anonymous, detailed online questionnaire offered to the entire congregation; ten congregants chose to complete it. My goal was to collect responses and narrative comments from both of these groups, utilizing some of the same questions for both as well as some unique for each. The P/L survey questions may be found in Appendix C, and the congregational online questionnaire questions in their entirety may be found in Appendix D. The third data collection method involved 90-minute individual Zoom interviews I facilitated with the pastor and with each of the five leaders. I took

detailed notes throughout each interview, and also recorded and confidentially archived the interview recordings.

I chose these data collection approaches because I wanted the pastor and church leaders to reflect and respond to the online survey questions in writing, adding narrative as they each felt led, as well as have the opportunity to share spontaneous stories, feelings, ideas, and reactions while interacting with me directly during our individual Zoom conversations. The Zoom conversations also afforded occasions for the pastor and leaders to reveal anecdotes from their own personal prayer histories, growth in personal prayer their church's BTP Initiative has fostered, and their observations of what has unfolded through the impact of churchwide prayer. Because the congregational online questionnaire allowed collection of responses from church attendees to some of the same questions included on the pastor and leader's online survey, I could compare leader and attendee perspectives as part of the case study project's analysis.

The P/L survey, congregational questionnaire, and Zoom interview questions were intentionally crafted to invite case study-verifying indicators in three dimensions. First, I sought to discover whether the pastor and leaders cognitively gained both knowledge and practical "how to" skills through the BTP training itself to then implement and lead such an initiative across their congregation. I also sought to ascertain whether during implementation church attendees cognitively learned what a "breakthrough prayer" is and its purpose in the corporate prayer life of the congregation. Second, I endeavored to assess through the three data collection methods whether affectively the pastor and church leaders, as well as the congregants, gained a perspective of the value of the breakthrough prayer's addition for increasing their capacity to sense

divine guidance, receive prayer breakthroughs, and identify next steps forward. Third, I hoped to assess the behavioral impact of the training. I sought to identify whether through the training's implementation the pastor, leaders, and church attendees began and continued to actively pray the additive breakthrough prayer as part of their regular prayer practices both together and individually and whether they were stepping out together to activate what their increased prayer discernment seemed to be leading them to pursue next both individually and as a congregation.

Implementation

For the implementation of the case study, my first step was to develop the pastor and leaders online survey and the online congregational questionnaire. A colleague helped me craft neutral, unbiased questions to receive more honest and candid responses. My professional associate also helped me carefully word the survey and questionnaire questions to invite narrative responses. All of the questions were intentionally worded to capture data that would potentially verify or disprove case study indicators in the three dimensions described earlier.

Next, a technical specialist assisted me in the creation of the two online tools utilizing the software application "JotForm." The two online data collection tools were set up to ensure case study participants could complete them anonymously and confidentially (using a number only to reference each participant) and that I could securely save the results in encrypted files to which only I have access. Before use, each of the two online tools were tested four times by non-case study participants for user-

friendliness and intelligibility, and, according to their feedback, adjustments were made before the two online tools were finalized for use.

Four weeks prior to the case study's launch, I contacted the pastor of Knightstown United Methodist Church via email, explaining my doctoral work and reasons I desired to accomplish a case study. I requested a phone conversation with the pastor so that I could invite him to consider participating in the case study and explain what it would involve plus answer questions. A week later, the phone conversation happened. The pastor agreed to bring my case study invitation to his church's leadership team meeting later that week. After their meeting, the pastor emailed me right away to confirm that the five lay leaders who had attended the BTP training the year before with him had all immediately agreed to participate and were ready to move directly to signing participant consent forms and getting started. In my case study project plans, I had envisioned contacting each of the lay leaders to explain the case study and answer any questions, but the pastor told me that step was not necessary.

Two weeks prior to the case study project launch, I emailed the pastor and each of the five lay leaders an informed consent form, requesting their respective signatures within a two-week time period. This was accomplished timely, and the informed consent form used for this church's case study may be referenced in Appendix E.

At case study launch, the pastor and each of the lay leader participants were emailed a link to the online P/L survey with instructions to allow themselves a minimum of one hour to complete it (and instructions how to save their work partway through and return to finish at a later time if needed). They were requested to complete and submit the

survey within two weeks. All six (pastor plus five lay leaders) completed and submitted their online surveys within the requested time frame.

Two weeks after case study launch, I emailed the pastor a link to the online congregational questionnaire. I requested he announce and explain the purpose of the congregational questionnaire from the pulpit during the Sunday worship service three consecutive weeks, inviting all congregants to complete the online questionnaire. I also asked him to make certain that all three weeks the questionnaire's link was emailed out to everyone on the church's email list with the same explanation and invitation in electronic form. During the three-week window for the congregational questionnaire, 10 church attendees completed and submitted it. I had hoped for at least 5 completed congregational questionnaires, so the actual number completed was double my expectations.

During the final week of the congregational questionnaire time period plus the following week, I scheduled and conducted an individual Zoom interview with the pastor and each of the five lay leaders. These encompassed sixty to ninety minutes each. I recorded each interview and also took written notes. The interview recordings have been stored in secure files to which only I have access.

The core questions I asked during each Zoom interview were intended to set the stage for anecdotal storytelling, personal reflections upon potentially deepening prayer engagement as a result of the addition of the BTP component, recounting of any challenges that had been encountered with implementation, and observations of prayer breakthroughs in the life of the congregation resulting in increased ministry fruitfulness. With each interview, the core questions led to unexpected conversational directions with additional sharing by each participant. Additionally, I asked at the end of every Zoom

interview what each would say to another church's leaders who were considering participating in a future BTP training.

After administering the surveys and conducting interviews, I spent the final weeks of my seven-week case study analyzing the data I collected. I conducted a detailed comparison of the pastor and leadership team's survey responses to the congregation's responses. I evaluated the additional comments the pastor, leaders and congregants left on their surveys. And I analyzed the interviews, assessing the pastor and leaders' feedback on the BTP training's year of implementation and their stories of its impact on the congregation.

According to information collected from case study participants who completed both the P/L survey, all but one had attended Knightstown Church for longer than five years (with one three to five years). All indicated they were also responsible for a committee, team, task force, Bible study, or class. Of those who completed the congregational questionnaire, seven indicated they consider themselves in a church leadership role, and three did not.

Summary of Learning

The hypothesis for my project was that if a BTP training were attended and then implemented by a congregation's pastor and key leaders, their church's collective prayer discernment capacity would increase. I conducted a case study to determine the extent to which the BTP training was assimilated and implemented by the pastor and leaders and whether it had yielded its intended results.

Verifiable indicators included feedback about the cognitive, affective, and behavioral usefulness and impact of the initial BTP training. Specifically, these represented three domains. I examined the extent that the additive component of breakthrough prayer asking God for new possibilities and next steps was effectively introduced by church leadership and regularly implemented into congregational prayer life ongoing. I documented the reported increased prayer discernment capacity of God's responses to the breakthrough prayer both congregationally and individually. And I analyzed the increased comfort level of leaders and congregants to notice, name, and act upon personal and church prayer discernment breakthroughs. To describe the case study feedback, I have included qualitative data summaries from each of these.

Breakthrough Prayer Initiative Training: Its Usefulness

The P/L online survey posed nine questions about sequential elements of the BTP training that the Knightstown pastor and five lay leaders attended with me. All nine questions featured a scale response choice (one corresponding to "Limited" through five corresponding to "Extensively"), and each question allowed optional space for additional comments.

Noteworthy in particular as cognitive and affective verification of the training's efficacy were the following questions and responses, including several validating narrative comments:

P/L Survey Question: The training gave me a strong understanding of the urgency and purpose of the short, additive "up and out" breakthrough prayer component that can be added to the prayer life of the congregation. (100% four and five response ratings)

- "Absolutely! The concept of praying together an intentional prayer as a church on Sundays, all church meetings, small groups, Sunday School, etc. is so 'simplistic' yet so impactful."
- "The initial training our team attended was instrumental in helping us understand the concept. All the examples were very useful and informative to help us design our plan forward."

P/L Survey Question: At the training, we received learning and examples about how to explain breakthrough prayer to our congregation, and ideas about how to introduce an additive breakthrough prayer to our church members for us to each pray, and for us to pray together. (100% four and five response ratings)

- "I left the training feeling like our Prayer Initiative team would be able to plan and implement it with our congregation."

P/L Survey Question: At the training, I learned the importance of also training our congregation to "notice and name" God's responses to breakthrough prayer that they receive or discern—rather than just only praying the prayer. (100% four and five response ratings)

- "'Notice and name' were the most powerful aspects of breakthrough prayer for me personally."

P/L Survey Question: At the training, we learned about practical strategies that can unite and rally our church to pray together, ongoing. (100% four and five response ratings)

- "We have used many suggestions from the training."

P/L Survey Question: At the training, we received guidance on what our very first steps should be to move towards implementing at our own church what we had learned—and were given optional time near the end/after end of the training to begin to discuss and plan this together. (100% four and five response ratings)

P/L Survey Question: The BTP training inspired and motivated me to want to move prayer to more of a priority in our congregation. (100% four and five response ratings)

- "Most definitely the initiative training was very inspiring and motivational. The training was extensive, thorough, and helpful to see how other churches used this for their own inspiration."

During the Zoom interviews with each participant in the P/L group, one additional verbal question was posed: Is there anything that would have been helpful to the implementation of your BTP Initiative that you as a leader (or pastor) didn't receive through the training? In 100% of the interviews, every participant affirmed that the training had equipped them sufficiently to return to their church and go forward with implementation. Only one suggestion was offered for potential additional enhancement to the training, which would be to invite a pastor or leader whose church had already implemented a BTP Initiative to be present to share assurance "that implementing all this is both possible and miraculous."

Breakthrough Prayer Initiative Implementation

The P/L survey and the congregational questionnaire both included eleven post-training implementation questions, also with a scale response choice (one corresponding

to “Limited” through five corresponding to “Extensively”) plus optional space for narrative additional comments. Ten questions were identical on both tools, and both questionnaires included one question unique to its respective participant group.

The P/L group was asked about how much time elapsed between training day and when they reconvened to create a short congregational breakthrough prayer and schedule next steps to introduce and integrate it within the church. All responded that they convened again “soon” as had been recommended at the training. One participant reported the debut of the prayer to the congregation took place April 16, 2023, ten weeks following the training event.

Behavioral validation indicators for implementation investigated by this section of the P/L survey and the congregational questionnaire probed three areas: whether the breakthrough prayer was included and creatively explained every week during the worship service (100% confirmed this by both tools); that it is regularly prayed when church members convene for classes, meetings, rehearsals, and other gatherings (majority confirmed, both tools); and that congregationally during worship, as well as in group gatherings, persons are regularly invited to share personal and congregational breakthroughs and answers to prayer (100% yes by both tools). This data reveals that the pastor and leaders had been equipped by cognitive learning, inspiration, and practical strategies at the training and effectively accomplished these technical implementation steps.

Of additional value in the implementation section of the congregational questionnaire was a unique question seeking cognitive data about church members’ clarity on what breakthrough prayer is. See Table 1 below for their narrative answers.

Table 1. Responses to Question 3 of Congregational Questionnaire.

3. In your own words, what is 'breakthrough prayer' – and what is its purpose?	
Data	**Responses**
pull people together as one. Reaching out to others	1
Breakthrough prayer is a prayer that unites our congregation in a guided prayer initiative that connects us and makes us awaken with a renewed awareness of answered prayer.	1
A community prayer.	1
Breakthrough prayer helps to focus congregation on praying together and uniting us as a church.	1
it is a way to pray as a congregation.	1
A Prayer about a specific situation, event, or person that you are asking God to intervene as only he can, and a way to see and share that he is working at all times in our lives.	1
Gets people to think about the importance of prayer.	1
It is to take time to see the blessings that God bestows on us.	1

I was surprised to note that no congregational questionnaire participant responded to this with the short, succinct description of breakthrough prayer that I repeated and emphasized multiple times during the training the pastors and leaders had attended. This was that breakthrough prayer is a short, additive component to the ongoing existing prayer life of an individual or congregation, asking God to miraculously break through anew with fresh possibilities and divine guidance for us to step out and follow. I initially considered this an apparent gap in the preparation I had provided to the pastor and leaders at the training. However, in a later question in the questionnaire's implementation section, congregational participants contributed the following narrative comments about the purpose and use of breakthrough prayer, some of which seem to positively confirm their understanding of the value of breakthrough prayer (Table 2).

Table 2. Responses to Question 12a of Congregational Questionnaire.

12a. In the ministry area(s) you participate in at the church, what (if any) has been the use of the church's breakthrough prayer? Describe here:	
Data	**Responses**
helping our group to make decisions	1
We use it when building a budget and making council decisions	1
Pray at many opportunities	1
Breakthrough prayer is repeated each Sunday Service and explained	1
I don't know.	1
As stated before it gives us all the opportunity to share what God is doing in our lives through prayer and also helps us to draw closer to him.	1
I have not attended any meetings or anything other than Sunday Services	1
Praying our breakthrough prayer with the kids	1

The BTP training urged those in attendance to carry the breakthrough prayer through all age groups across the congregation after the powerful historic example of Herrnhut and its children's prayer movement that ignited prayer engagement among all ages. Both online tools asked about breakthrough prayer integration at Knightstown Church with children and teens. Fifty percent of the congregational questionnaire participants and 100% of the P/L participants confirmed that leaders had carried out implementation into the youth and children's ministry. After their Zoom interview, one leader sent me Knightstown's adult and children's breakthrough prayer cards that had been distributed (See Appendix F). P/L survey narrative comments from the leaders about implementation with children also verified their intentionality:

- "When we created our Breakthrough prayer for the adults, we also used key words from the adult version and created one for our kiddos."

- "They were given bracelets, squeeze balls, bookmarks, all with the prayer printed on them. Junior church leaders also pray the Breakthrough prayer with the children."
- "We taught the children about breakthrough prayer in VBS [Vacation Bible School] this summer."

Increased Congregational Prayer Discernment Capacity

Both the P/L survey and the congregational questionnaire invited feedback about the outplay of the BTP Initiative implementation in the church's collective prayer discernment capacity.

According to the P/L survey, 100% extensively or strongly affirmed that "the addition of breakthrough prayer seemed to inspire the church to look to God for guidance through the increased prayer focus." According to the congregational questionnaire's identical question, 80% extensively or strongly affirmed the same. Additionally, five of six participants in the P/L survey indicated extensive or strong agreement that "we have gained all-congregation prayer momentum together through the addition of our breakthrough prayer our church has been praying." Eight of ten congregants affirmed that statement on the congregational questionnaire.

Increased Personal Prayer Discernment Capacity

The pastor and leaders (P/L) survey also questioned participants about their personal practice of prayer prior to attending the BTP training, with 67% confirming prayer had already been a top priority in their faith. Following a year of implementing the

BTP Initiative, 34% of the leaders indicated additional significant growth in their personal prayer discernment. Narrative explanations they provided are noted in Table 3.

Table 3. Narrative Responses to P/L Survey.

Explain your response in more detail, as you feel led to do so:	
Data	**Responses**
Realization, and simple reminder to seek God and to listen and act upon what he puts on your heart.	1
I believe that the breakthrough prayer has heightened my awareness of my own relationship with God and his guidance in not only my life by the lives of the people of our church. Maybe I'm more compassionate or my awareness is heightened of all the needs and breakthroughs that happen. I believe this has help us become more vocal of these prayers and praises, thus everyone can pray together or praise in his name together.	1
By adding the breakthrough prayer, I have given myself another prayer for daily use. Another prayer is in my prayer list to pray each day or multiple times a day to God. Brings me closer to God and what He wants from me.	1
It has heightened my awareness of answered prayer.	1
Through Breakthrough Prayer I believe God is drawing me closer.	1

Likewise, the congregational questionnaire asked participants about their personal prayer practice engagement before the breakthrough prayer was introduced across the congregation, and about their personal prayer practice engagement a year after implementation. Of ten participants, 30% indicated prayer was already a top priority beforehand, 40% indicated "occasional prayer during the day," and 20% acknowledged "prayer was honestly not a priority in my life." When asked about their personal prayer practice engagement a year after the breakthrough prayer was implemented, 50% marked personal prayer was now an extensive priority, with another 30% confirming its heightened importance.

Increased Comfort Noticing, Naming, and Acting Upon Prayer Discernment

Data feedback for the case study regarding this indicator was positively evidenced through the P/L survey, the congregational questionnaire, and anecdotally during the Zoom interviews. In response to the question (asked in all three data collection methods) about what prayer discernment breakthroughs and responses from God had been reported, P/L survey participants mentioned personal level "relationship troubles resolved," "family crisis resolved," "a need that was met definitely attributed to the power of prayer," "sickness resolved," and "cancer in remission." At a congregational level, P/L survey breakthrough prayer responses included "direction for new ministries revealed," "people stepping up to give leadership to new ministries," "new Bible studies have begun," and "the start of a new after school program for children."

Likewise, to the same question on the congregational questionnaire, participants named personal-level responses to prayer: "a friend survived cancer," "people being healed from illness and school children finding help with personal situations," and "improved health." Only one named a congregational breakthrough: "increased participation in youth outreach." Three answered with "we have a breakthrough prayer cross," "we have a cross in the sanctuary," and "prayer cross." When P/L survey and congregational questionnaire narrative comments were compared, church leaders named more breakthroughs and prayer discernment of God's new open doors for the collective church.

During their Zoom interviews, four different P/L participants recounted an effort they had created together with their pastor to help set the stage for the congregation's growth of discernment capacity during the BTP Initiative's implementation. It was the

placement of a large plain wooden cross in the front altar area of the Sanctuary. Next to the cross, they made ribbons of various colors available in a basket. Each Sunday during worship, the pastor or another leader invited anyone who had discerned (noticed) a prayer "breakthrough or blessing" of any size that week to come forward and tie a ribbon on the cross as a visual confirmation, or as a method to symbolically "name" or acknowledge it. Over ensuing months, the cross had become increasingly laden with many ribbons. Leaders described the cross as a significant visual reference point to remind the congregation about the power of prayer, the priority of the church's corporate breakthrough prayer together, and the faithfulness of God in response to their prayers. During one Zoom interview, a leader named the value of the congregation's prayer cross as instrumental to the church's corporate breakthrough prayer momentum. A photo of the cross was provided by one of the case study's P/L participants (see Appendix G).

In all three data collection methods, participants were asked whether the church had acted upon its breakthrough prayer discernment of God's guidance forward: "After a prayer breakthrough has been shared, has the church taken any new step forward that you remember?" On the P/L survey, 83% responded "Yes." Additional narrative comment examples from the P/L participants are listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Narrative Responses to P/L Survey.

If yes – what was it? What happened after that?	
Data	**Responses**
1. Started a Men's group that meets twice a month 2. Started a Women's group that meets weekly 3. Started an after school program that meets every Monday during the school year. 4. Opened up our Jr/Sr High youth center every Wednesday 5. Youth confirmation class with 8 youth being Baptized	1
We have rejuvenated God's Gang with is a time for students from kindergarten to fifth grade to come together at KUMC to learn about God, do crafts, sing, and have refreshments one day a week for approximately 75 minutes. This happens one afternoon per week after school.	1
Once the after school program began, there were so many more children attending than was previously expected. A call out to the church members for additional helpers was announced. This was fulfilled quickly.	1
People volunteered to help with a new children's ministry and it has been implemented and it ministers to 50-60 elementary school children on a weekly basis. People volunteered to help with a new teenage ministry and it has been implemented and it ministers on a weekly basis to 5-8 teenagers People volunteered to help with a new Sunday School class for middle and high schoolers and it has been implemented and last year 6 young people were baptized and/or confirmed. The class continues.	1

During the P/L group's individual Zoom interviews, participants waxed effusive as they related additional details and outcomes, which included:

- "One of the biggest breakthroughs was that some people rose up and discerned God leading them to help with a Sunday class for teenagers, which turned into a confirmation class with prayer always a part of it. Five had never been baptized, so we baptized them!"
- "A program that really took off during our Breakthrough Prayer Initiative is Monday after school where school buses now drop off approximately 60 kids from our community for something called God's Gang, with young leaders now mostly leading it who sensed God calling them to step up. Many others

have felt led to help as well. I think about everyone in our church is now willing to volunteer with whatever is needed."

- "I think what has helped our congregation respond to God has been realizing that breakthrough prayer is asking, then taking the time to listen to God for God's response, noticing what God is putting on our hearts."
- "If we had not emphasized [from the BTP training] that it's both praying and asking God to break through, and also then listening and noticing God's responses, we wouldn't have had people who stepped up to lead God's Gang, our youth ministry, or anything else that's unfolded."

Additional Impacts Reported from Breakthrough Prayer Initiative Implementation

During the P/L group's Zoom interviews, participants described additional evidence of the implemented Breakthrough Prayer Initiative's intangible impact upon the corporate prayer life of the congregation.

- "There was a time where people weren't on board with prayer in our church, yes. But that's not our church now. The Breakthrough Prayer Initiative has provided us a common, shared language, and prayer is now what we do on every occasion when we are together in worship and every other gathering. Adults, teens and children, we are all praying and asking God for new breakthroughs and then listening for God's responses. It's brought everyone together and united us."
- "What we pray about has changed. Now people share about God's proactivity, not just what has gone wrong and asking for prayer to fix it.

Before [the Breakthrough Prayer Initiative] prayer was for bad things. Now we point to our Sanctuary prayer cross, all the additions of ribbons that represent prayer breakthroughs and blessings, and we are getting people to share not only about their concerns but also what have been blessings or 'God moments.'"

- "At one point in time we had more funerals than memberships. Now we do have younger people, families with young children. And even a confirmation class! Definitely we are more open to God's will and listening or looking for it, versus us just telling God what needs to happen."
- "Breakthrough prayer means openness to what God wants, not just what I want. Surrendering and allowing God's lead. This prayer attitude is moving across our whole church."
- "What has helped us create a Breakthrough Prayer movement? A strong pastor who has kept it in front of the people every single week in worship, a lay leadership team that takes it seriously, so people see that. And then when you start seeing the results of it, people start finally realizing that praying and asking God, then listening and following will guide us forward if we are true to it."

Conclusion

I conclude from the data provided by the Knightstown Church case study that my hypothesis was validated. The efficacy of the BTP training for the pastor and lay leaders

did in fact provide cognitive, affective, and behavioral equipping so that they launched and led an ongoing congregational prayer movement that increased congregational discernment capacity of God's next possibilities at Knightstown Church. This case study suggests that the BTP training is a viable complimentary training option that could be offered for all students at United.

The case study data came from a church whose pastor plus a team of five lay leaders attended the training and then together implement it across their congregation. The data underscored the crucial role of a pastor as the spiritual leader of a church's prayer initiative and the necessity of church lay leaders to partner and actively engage in carrying the breakthrough prayer practice beyond weekly worship inclusion into the heart of every other church gathering for all ages as trained. The three data collection tools designed and used for the case study proved viable instruments and could be used again in the future to assess efficacy with other congregations whose pastors and lay leadership teams attend BTP trainings.

Potential additional case studies to assess efficacy, utilizing the same data collection tools with slight customizations, could be considered with a church whose pastor attended the training alone without a lay leader team. A case study could also be considered with a church that sent a few lay leaders to the training without their pastor. From the Historical Foundations research that the Silesian children's prayer movement was what ignited a wave of spiritual renewal across the European Church after the Thirty Years War, I feel led to press forward into creating an age appropriate BTP training for children as another potential next step.

Having learned that case study participants who completed the congregational questionnaire were unable to articulate exactly what "breakthrough prayer" is in their narrative comments, I intend to emphasize how to express this to congregants more succinctly in future BTP trainings that include pastors and their leaders. The data also confirmed the value of lay leaders partnering with the pastor to help integrate breakthrough prayer into teams, committees, classes and ministries with all ages. Given this, in the future I intend to communicate the strategic urgency more emphatically ahead of time for churches to encourage their pastor(s) and as many lay leaders as possible to attend a BTP training together, in order to maximize comprehensive implementation afterwards.

My hope is that, given the case study's validation of the training's efficacy, United supports the Innovation Center's complimentary routine offering a BTP training to its current students enrolled or registered in both degree and non-degree programs, together with their church or ministry leadership teams. United could also expand an ongoing invitation to alumni who lead congregations or ministries, along with their leadership teams.

At the close of each P/L individual Zoom interview, I asked what they would say to another church's pastor and leaders considering attendance at a BTP training.

- "I would ask them if they believe prayer makes a difference? And if they do, then I think it is definitely worth their time! Before we were 'snacking' on prayer, and now we are 'feasting' on it. And this is a huge help to our church. I would also say you can't do this without the training, because it opens your eyes to all the different scenarios out there."

- “I have to admit, I was dreading the training. I have been in lots of training classes over my career. But this was completely different. Engaging, thought provoking. I took 15 pages of notes and have referred to them repeatedly since!”
- “I would emphasize to another church that this is not just coming up with a prayer and saying it every Sunday. That’s not what this is about.”
- “I would tell them they should [attend this training] because they don’t know what is in store for them. The Breakthrough Prayer Initiative will open their eyes to other opportunities they haven’t thought of. And be persistent because it’s going to take time for the transition to start looking, to ask God to open your eyes and ask God for guidance together.”
- “I would tell them to go [to the training]! Don’t go with preconceived ideas. Go with an open mind and really take it all in. Pray and truly listen to God’s guidance.”
- “If your pastor isn’t behind it, your church will struggle. And [our leaders]—their sincerity and leadership across the church has made a huge difference. Our leaders are living and doing it and haven’t quit. That is the reason why this initiative has been successful, and why other initiatives in the past haven’t.”

These comments further fuel my deep passion to continue enhancing and leading the BTP training. EPILOGUE: In light of the case study’s evidence of efficacy, as of November 2024 United offers this as an ongoing complimentary training available to all enrolled United students through the Innovation Center.

APPENDIX A

INDIANA CONFERENCE BTP TRAINING HANDOUT

SESSION 1: WHAT IS A BREAKTHROUGH PRAYER INITIATIVE?

- Your most important question

- Different types of prayer—and what "breakthrough prayer" is all about

- God's Church: an organization, or a movement?

- How to assess whether a Breakthrough Prayer Initiative is the next step for your congregation

Innovation Center AT UNITED

SESSION 2: TYPES OF BREAKTHROUGH PRAYER (AND REMOVING ROADBLOCKS)

- Threshold ("Holy Surrender") Breakthrough Prayer
- Archer's ("Pickaxe") Breakthrough Prayer
- Prevailing ("Upsurge") Breakthrough Prayer

REMOVING PRAYER ROADBLOCKS:

- Specific versus generalized prayer
- Praying aloud versus silently
- Lights On/Lights Off prayer
- Prayer "postures" – and the one that mobilizes a movement

Innovation Center AT UNITED

SESSION 3: GETTING STARTED--
CRAFTING AND LAUNCHING A BREAKTHROUGH PRAYER

- Choose your strategy intentionally

- Crafting a breakthrough prayer additive component—words to the wise

- Introducing and launching your breakthrough prayer congregation-wide

- Best practices: leading and guiding your breakthrough prayer initiative

Innovation Center AT UNITED

SESSION 4: ADD ONGOING BREAKTHROUGH PRAYER MOMENTUM TO ALL DIMENSIONS OF CONGREGATIONAL LIFE (EXAMPLES)

- Worship

- Meetings and Gatherings

- Discipleship and Spiritual Growth (all ages)

- Missions and Service

Innovation Center AT UNITED

YOU AND YOUR CHURCH'S TEAM: DISCUSSION AND NEXT-STEP IMPLEMENTATION QUESTIONS

1. What ideas, examples and possibilities did you learn about (or think of) during today's training that have excited you to consider regarding a breakthrough prayer initiative for your church? Write them down here to keep in mind.

2. Now make a list of what *already exists* at your church relative to prayer (meetings that include prayer, worship service prayer, prayer chains, etc.). How might you add, enhance, renew and/or advance the practice of breakthrough prayer in each setting. What could be done, and how? Be specific.

3. Discuss and plan a timeline for creating and introducing a short additive breakthrough prayer to the existing prayer life of your congregation.

   - Who will serve on the team to pray, then gather to discern a short "upward and outward" focused breakthrough prayer component for your church—one that asks God for divine guidance to see and envision your next steps, open doors and new possibilities?

   - When will this team meet to begin the discernment work in creating a churchwide breakthrough prayer additive component? Identify a date and time now, if possible.

   - When (and by whom) do you think would be the soonest appropriate time and setting for the breakthrough prayer additive component to be introduced to your congregation?

Innovation Center AT UNITED

4. How and when could answers to prayer (breakthroughs, etc.) be regularly reported and celebrated in every setting of the life of your church, ministry or team?

   - Brainstorm what could encourage your team or congregation to recognize and share reports of God's faithfulness and breakthroughs in response to prayer.

5. **What and when will be your first next breakthrough prayer "action step" - after discussing these implementation questions now? Write it here.**

APPENDIX B

BTP TRAINING SLIDES

Breakthrough
Prayer
Initiative
Training
with Rev. Sue Nilson Kibbey

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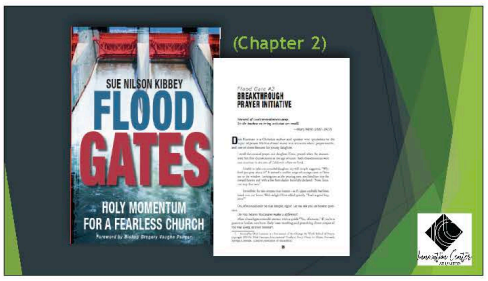
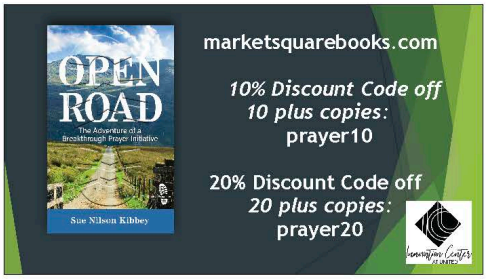

(Chapter 2)
SUE NILSON KIBBEY
FLOOD GATES
HOLY MOMENTUM FOR A FEARLESS CHURCH

2

SUE NILSON KIBBEY
ULTIMATE RELIANCE

3


OPEN ROAD
The Adventure of a Breakthrough Prayer Initiative
Sue Nilson Kibbey
marketsquarebooks.com
10% Discount Code off
10 plus copies:
prayer10
20% Discount Code off
20 plus copies:
prayer20

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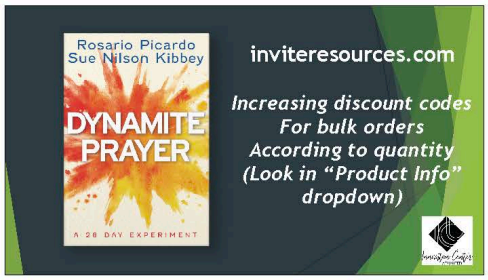
Rosario Picardo
Sue Nilson Kibbey
DYNAMITE PRAYER
A 28 DAY EXPERIMENT
inviteresources.com
Increasing discount codes
For bulk orders
According to quantity
(Look in "Product Info"
dropdown)

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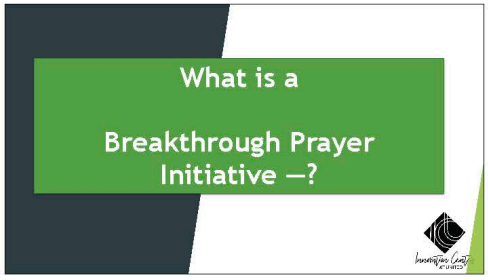
Introduction
...and your most important
question

6


What is a
Breakthrough Prayer
Initiative —?

7

God's Church:
an ORGANIZATION...
or a
MOVEMENT

8

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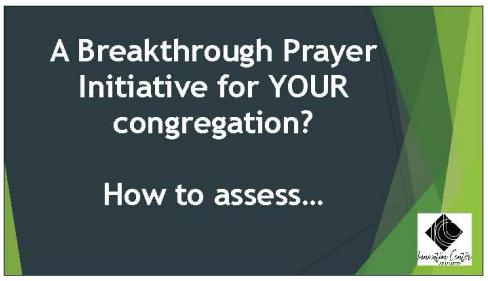

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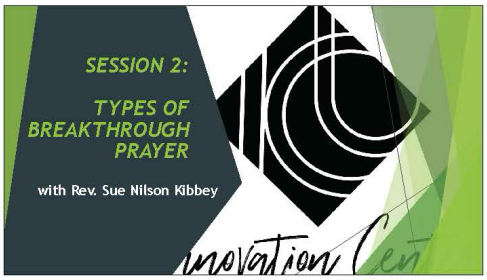

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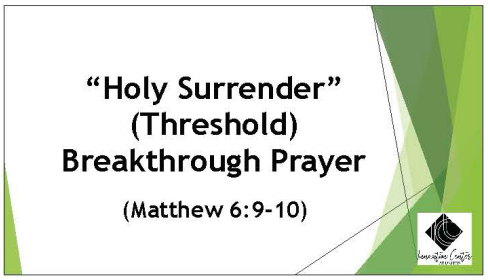

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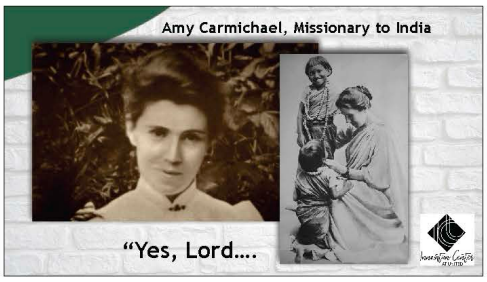

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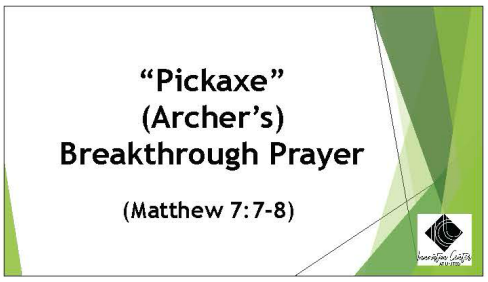


16

17

"Upsurge"
(Prevailing)
Breakthrough Prayer

(Psalm 61:1-2)

18

19

Discussion/
Reflection
Moments

20

Removing
ROADBLOCKS
To
Breakthrough Prayer

21

Prayer "postures" -
and the one that
mobilizes a
MOVEMENT

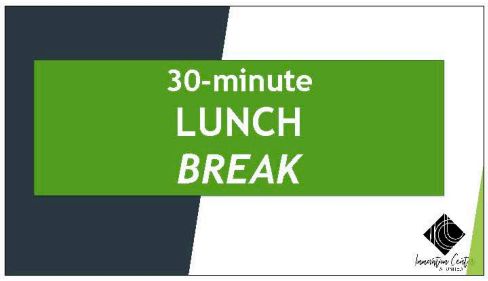
22

10 minutes:
Walking
and
Praying!

23

What was praying and
walking like for you?
Share a one-word
description…

24



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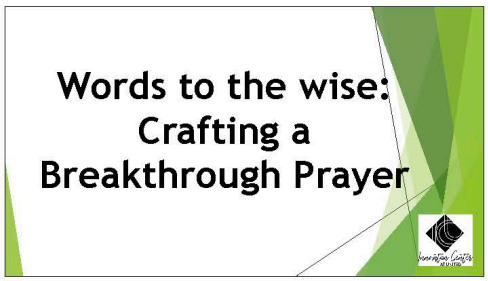

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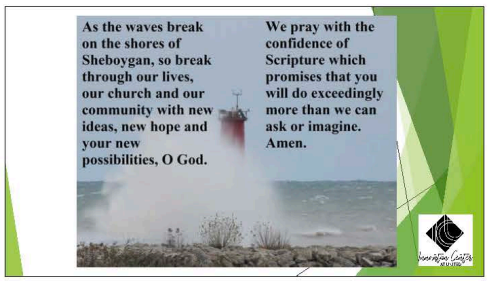
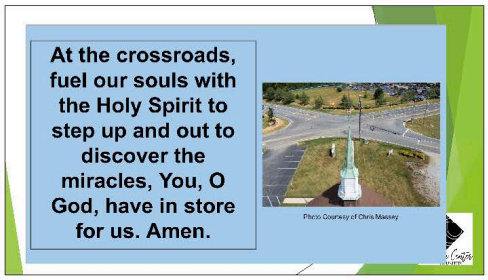
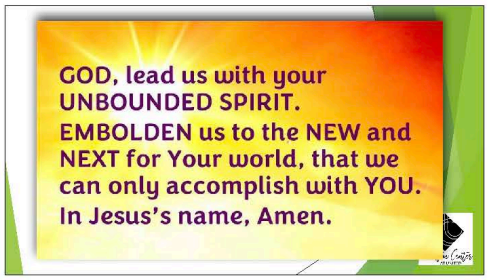

As the waves break on the shores of Sheboygan, so break through our lives, our church and our community with new ideas, new hope and your new possibilities, O God.
We pray with the confidence of Scripture which promises that you will do exceedingly more than we can ask or imagine. Amen.

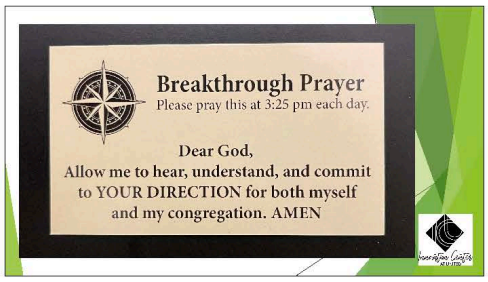
28


At the crossroads, fuel our souls with the Holy Spirit to step up and out to discover the miracles, You, O God, have in store for us. Amen.
Photo Courtesy of Chris Massey

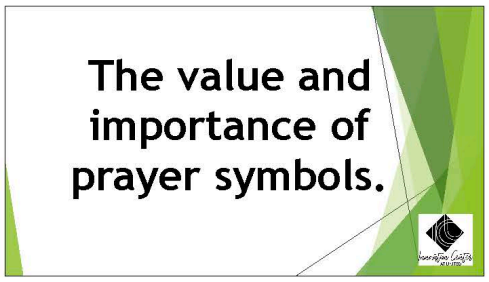
29


GOD, lead us with your UNBOUNDED SPIRIT.
EMBOLDEN us to the NEW and NEXT for Your world, that we can only accomplish with YOU.
In Jesus's name, Amen.

30


Breakthrough Prayer
Please pray this at 3:25 pm each day.
Dear God,
Allow me to hear, understand, and commit to YOUR DIRECTION for both myself and my congregation. AMEN

31



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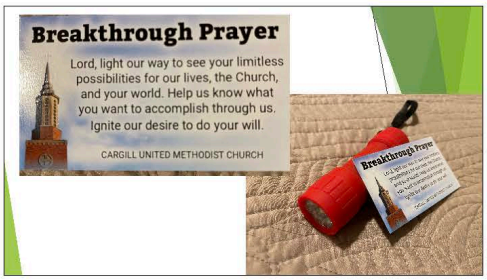
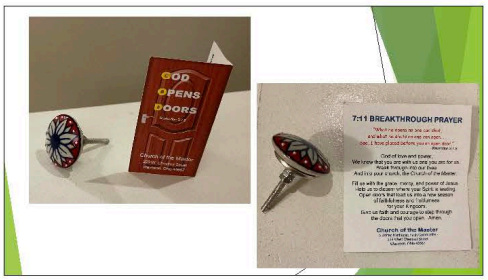

Breakthrough Prayer
Lord, light our way to see your limitless possibilities for our lives, the Church, and your world. Help us know what you want to accomplish through us. Ignite our desire to do your will.
CARGILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

33



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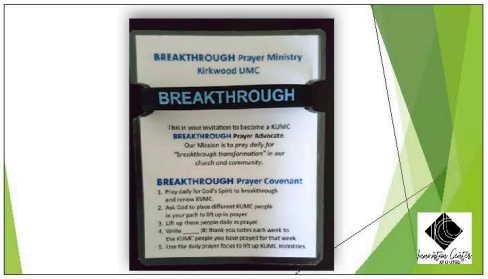

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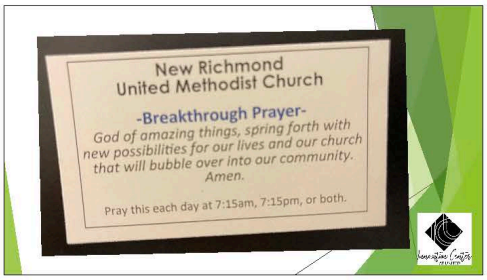
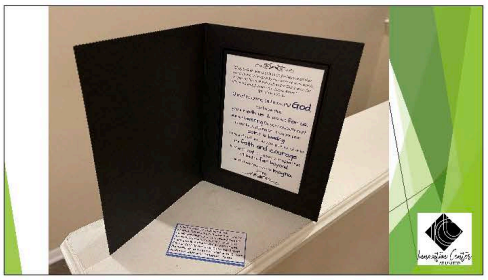

New Richmond
United Methodist Church
-Breakthrough Prayer-
God of amazing things, spring forth with new possibilities for our lives and our church that will bubble over into our community.
Amen.
Pray this each day at 7:15am, 7:15pm, or both.

37



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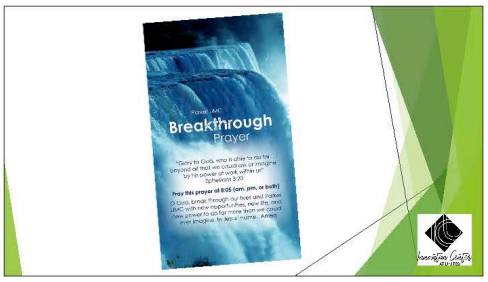
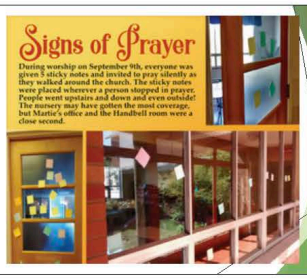


40

Infuse prayer—
in and during
WORSHIP

(Examples)

41


Signs of Prayer
During worship on September 9th, everyone was given 5 sticky notes and invited to pray silently as they walked around the church. The sticky notes were placed wherever a person stopped in prayer. People went upstairs and down and even outside! The nursery may have gotten the most coverage, but Martie's office and the Handbell room were a close second.

42

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44

Train people to expect, notice and name when God breaks through!

45

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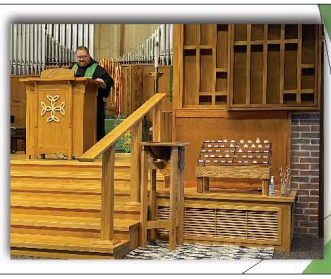

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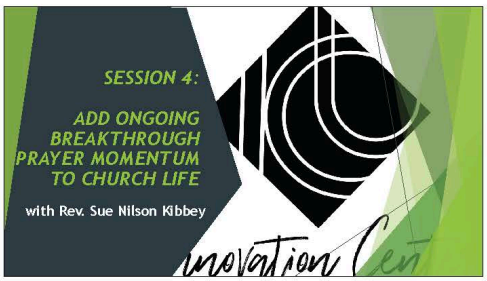

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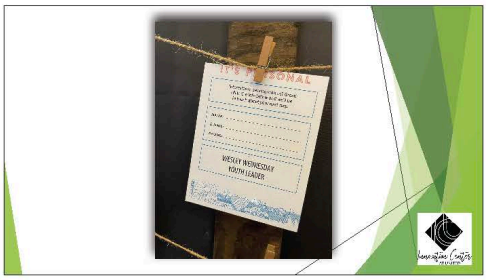

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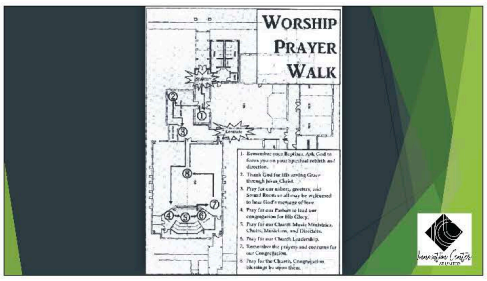

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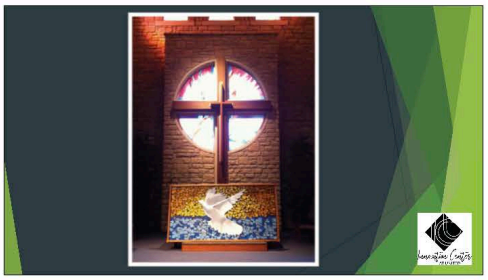

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63

64

IDEAS AND
DISCUSSION TIME

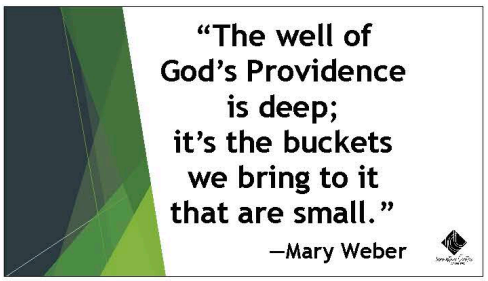
65

More Breakthrough Prayer Initiative resources
...are listed on the last page of your participant booklet for today's training

66

snkibbey@united.edu
**Join the "Breakthrough Prayer Initiative" Facebook group

67


"The well of God's Providence is deep; it's the buckets we bring to it that are small."
—Mary Weber

68

Breakthrough
Prayer
Initiative
Training
with Rev. Sue Nilson Kibbey

69

APPENDIX C

BTP TRAINING CASE STUDY ONLINE SURVEY FOR PASTOR AND LEADERS OF KNIGHTSTOWN UMC

Breakthrough Prayer Initiative

INDIVIDUAL ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE for pastor and church leaders:

This Case Study survey is divided into **three parts**, and in each part you'll find multiple questions.

Part 1 = The "Breakthrough Prayer Initiative" training event (this part features questions and reflections about the training itself)
Part 2 = "Breakthrough Prayer Initiative" Post-Training: Implementation at My Church (this part features questions and reflections about how everything unfolded when you implemented the training afterwards with the congregation)
Part 3 = "Breakthrough Prayer Initiative" Post-Training: Your Personal Implementation (this part features questions and reflections about how the Breakthrough Prayer Initiative has impacted your own personal prayer life)

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Plan **a minimum of one hour or longer** to complete the survey.

2. You will be able to exit the survey partway through, then log back in to complete it fully if this becomes necessary.

3. For the best possible experience, **please do not use your phone to complete this survey**. I suggest using either a tablet or laptop/computer.

4. **Questions marked with * are required** — and must be answered before you'll be allowed to "submit" the survey at the end.

5. You are invited to **explain your answers** in as much detail as possible, which will be helpful to the case study's purpose. Every effort has been made to make this survey completely anonymous. Hopefully this will help you feel comfortable to be as reflective and transparent as possible.

NOTE: **To protect the integrity of this survey (and the overall case study), please do not discuss or share your answers to these survey questions with others who are participating in the case study (or members of the congregation who will be invited to complete a congregational survey) until all aspects of the case study have been completed.**

I have read the above and am ready to take the Breakthrough Prayer Initiative survey for leaders. *

○ Yes

About You

Demographic Information

How long have you attended this church? *

- ○ Less than a year
- ○ 1-3 years
- ○ 3-5 years
- ○ Longer than 5 years

Do you consider yourself in a leadership role at this church? *

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If yes, what are you currently leading or helping to lead(select all that apply)?

- ☐ Bible study/group/class
- ☐ Committee, team or task force
- ☐ A ministry area
- ☐ Other

BEFORE attending the Breakthrough Prayer Initiative training and helping with implementation of it at your church, what priority did prayer have in your personal faith life (select all that apply)? *

- ☐ Top priority; I spent focused time every day in prayer.
- ☐ I didn't feel like I had much time for prayer, but knew it was important.
- ☐ I sometimes prayed during the day when driving or at other moments.
- ☐ Prayer was honestly not a priority in my faith life.
- ☐ I was uncertain (or skeptical) whether prayer actually makes a difference.
- ☐ Other

If Other, explain:

PART 1: "Breakthrough Prayer Initiative" Training

The "Breakthrough Prayer Initiative" training event (this part features questions and reflections about the training itself)

1. The training gave me a strong understanding of the urgency and purpose of the short, additive "up and out" breakthrough prayer component that can be added to the prayer life of a congregation. *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively
○ I don't remember

Explain answer (optional):

2. At the training, we received learning and examples about how to explain breakthrough prayer to our congregation, and ideas about how to introduce an additive breakthrough prayer to our church members for us to each pray, and for us to pray together. *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively
○ I don't remember

Explain answer (optional):

3. At the training, an adequate scriptural explanation of "Holy Surrender" breakthrough prayer, "Pickaxe" or Archer's breakthrough prayer, and "Upsurge" or Prevailing breakthrough prayer was provided so that I understood these. *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively
○ I don't remember

Explain answer (optional):

4. At the training, I saw enough examples of short additive breakthrough prayers from other congregations to give me a clear picture about creating one (or using one of the examples) for our church. *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively
○ I don't remember

Explain answer (optional):

5. At the training, I learned the importance of also training our congregation to "notice and name" God's responses to breakthrough prayer that they receive or observe—rather than only just praying the prayer, etc. *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively
○ I don't remember

Explain answer (optional):

6a. At the training, we learned about practical strategies that can unite and rally our church to pray together, ongoing. *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively

6b. The strategies for different ways to unite our entire congregation to pray together for breakthroughs, that we learned at the training, have been helpful and effective in our implementation. *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively

(Optional) What has specifically helped unite your congregation to pray together ongoing? Describe here:

7. At the training, the various examples and video stories provided of how other congregations have woven prayer throughout various aspects of church life gave me ideas about what we could create or implement in our own church. *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively
○ I don't remember

Explain answer (optional):

8. At the training, we received guidance on what our very first steps should be to move towards implementing at our own church what we had learned—and were given optional time near the end/after end of the training to begin to discuss and plan this together. *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively
○ I don't remember

Explain answer (optional):

9. The "Breakthrough Prayer Initiative" training inspired and motivated me to want to move prayer to more of a priority in our congregation. *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively
○ I don't remember

Explain answer (optional):

PART 2: "Breakthrough Prayer Initiative" POST-TRAINING: IMPLEMENTATION at my Church

"Breakthrough Prayer Initiative" Post-Training: Implementation at My Church (this part features questions and reflections about how everything unfolded when you implemented the training afterwards with the congregation)

10a. After the training, our pastor and other church leader(s) convened us again soon to create a short additive breakthrough prayer we could introduce to our congregation. *

◯ Yes ◯ No

Any additional explanation:

11. What was your sense of the congregation's initial openness to the introduction and adoption of the breakthrough prayer additive component to the church's prayer together? *

◯ 1 Poor ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯ 5 Immediate

12a. Is your church's additive breakthrough prayer component included each week in worship service(s)? *

◯ Yes ◯ Sometimes ◯ No

12b. Is the purpose of your Breakthrough Prayer explained anew to the congregation each time, before they pray it together? *

◯ Yes ◯ No ◯ Sometimes

12c. If yes or sometimes, how is what Breakthrough Prayer is re-explained? *

◯ In Writing ◯ Verbally ◯ Other

Please describe:

13. As far as you are aware, is the breakthrough prayer regularly prayed when church members convene for classes, meetings, rehearsals, etc.? *

◯ Yes ◯ Sometimes ◯ No

If yes or sometimes, list here any church gatherings, etc. where you believe it is regularly prayed:

14a. Has the congregation, or individual church members who attend meetings, choir rehearsals, classes, and groups, been invited to share personal and congregational breakthroughs and answers to prayer? *

◯ Yes ◯ No

14b. What examples of specific breakthrough in answers to prayer have been mentioned?

14c. After a prayer breakthrough has been shared, has the church taken any new step forward that you remember? *

◯ Yes ◯ No

If yes-what was it? What happened after that?

15a. In general, what is your sense of how widely the additive breakthrough prayer component has been incorporated throughout the congregation? *

◯ 1 Limited ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯ 5 Extensively

15b. If limited, what reasons may have contributed to this? Place your comments here:

16. The children of our church have been included in our breakthrough prayer initiative. *

1 Limited 2 3 4 5 Extensively

Describe here, as applicable:

17. The youth (teens) of our church have been included in our breakthrough prayer initiative. *

1 Limited 2 3 4 5 Extensively

Describe here, as applicable:

18a. I believe that the addition of the breakthrough prayer component has deepened our congregation's focus together on prayer, and looking to God for divine guidance forward. *

1 Limited 2 3 4 5 Extensively

18b. I believe we have gained all-congregation prayer momentum together through the addition of our breakthrough prayer our church has been praying. *

○1 Limited ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 Extensively

Describe your observations in more detail here, if you wish:

19a. Has there been resistance or pushback to the addition of breakthrough prayer in any ministry area or age group of your congregation? *

○Yes ○No

If yes, describe here:

19b. If yes, how was it addressed—if it was? Share here:

20. Overall, to what extent has the addition of "breakthrough prayer" seemed to inspire the church to look to God for guidance through the increased prayer focus? *

○1 Not at all ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 Extensively

PART 3: "BREAKTHROUGH PRAYER INITIATIVE" POST-TRAINING: YOUR PERSONAL IMPLEMENTATION

"Breakthrough Prayer Initiative" Post-Training: Your Personal Implementation (this part features questions and reflections about how the Breakthrough Prayer Initiative has impacted your own personal prayer life)

21a. In the ministry area(s) you lead, are responsible for, or participate in, what (if any) has been the use of the added breakthrough prayer? Describe here: *

21b. To what degree have you felt inspired, motivated or renewed through the addition of breakthrough prayer in your own prayer life? *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively

21c. How often do you personally pray your church's breakthrough prayer? *

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Occasionally
- ○ When the congregation is praying it together
- ○ Daily
- ○ More than once each day
- ○ Other

If other, please describe:

22. I believe that the addition of the breakthrough prayer in my own prayer life has deepened and grown my own discernment of God's guidance, breakthroughs and next steps for me personally. *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively

Explain your response in more detail, as you feel led to do so:

23. I have personally sensed God's guidance forward for our congregation since we launched the additive breakthrough prayer. *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively

Share any examples of God's forward guidance for the congregation you've noticed, as applicable:

24a. BEFORE you attended this training, to what degree did you personally believe that prayer makes a difference? *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively

24b. AFTER attending this training and adding it to your own prayer life, to what degree do you now personally believe that prayer makes a difference? *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively

Thank you for completing this confidential survey for the Breakthrough Prayer Initiative case study! If you are satisfied with your responses, please "submit" to complete it.

Submit

APPENDIX D

BTP TRAINING CASE STUDY ONLINE CONGREGATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE
FOR KNIGHTSTOWN UMC

"Breakthrough Prayer Initiative" Case Study

ONLINE confidential, anonymous "Feedback" SURVEY for members and attendees of Knightstown United Methodist Church

How helpful and effective has your church's "Breakthrough Prayer Initiative been?

The purpose of this **confidential, anonymous** survey is to collect your thoughts and feedback about that.

This Case Study survey is divided into **two parts**, and in each part you'll find multiple questions.

Part 1 = this part features questions and asks for your thoughts about how everything unfolded when your congregation began to pray your church's breakthrough prayer both together, and individually—and what may have happened since, as you've been praying together.

Part 2 = This part features questions and asks for your thoughts about how the Breakthrough Prayer Initiative has impacted your own personal prayer life

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Plan a **minimum of 30 minutes** to complete the survey.

2. If it becomes necessary, you will be able to exit the survey partway through, then log back in to complete it.

3. For the best possible experience, **please do not use your phone to complete this survey.** Use either a tablet or laptop/computer.

4. **Questions marked with * are required** — and must be answered before you'll be allowed to "submit" the survey at the end.

5. You are invited to explain your answers in as much detail as possible, which will be helpful to the case study'sfeedback. Every effort has been made to make this survey completely anonymous. Hopefully this will help you feel comfortable to be as reflective and transparent as possible.

NOTE: **To protect the integrity of this survey (and the overall case study), please do not discuss or share your answersto these survey questions with other members of the congregation who have also been invited complete thiscongregational survey) until all aspects of the case study have been completed.**

I have read the above and am ready to take the Breakthrough Prayer Initiative for congregational feedback survey. *

◯ Yes

About You

Demographic Information

How long have you attended this church? *

- ○ Less than a year
- ○ 1-3 years
- ○ 3-5 years
- ○ Longer than 5 years

Do you consider yourself in a leadership role at this church? *

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If yes, what are you currently leading or helping to lead(select all that apply)?

- ☐ Bible study/group/class
- ☐ Committee, team or task force
- ☐ A ministry area
- ☐ Other

BEFORE your church began praying its breakthrough prayer together, what priority did prayer have in your personal faith life (select all that apply)? *

- ☐ Top priority; I spent focused time every day in prayer.
- ☐ I didn't feel like I had much time for prayer, but knew it was important.
- ☐ I sometimes prayed during the day when driving or at other moments.
- ☐ Prayer was honestly not a priority in my faith life.
- ☐ I was uncertain (or skeptical) whether prayer actually makes a difference.
- ☐ Other

If Other, explain here:

PART 1: "Breakthrough Prayer Initiative" IMPLEMENTATION at my Church

This part features questions and asks for your thoughts about how everything unfolded when your congregation began to pray your church's breakthrough prayer both together, and individually—and what may have happened since, as you've been praying together.

1. What was your sense of your congregation's initial openness to the introduction and adoption of the breakthrough prayer when it was introduced to everyone? *

◯ 1 Poor ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯ 5 Immediate

2a. Is your church's breakthrough prayer included each week in worship service(s)? *

◯ Yes ◯ Sometimes ◯ No

2b. Is the purpose of your breakthrough prayer explained anew to the congregation each time, before they pray it together? *

◯ Yes ◯ No ◯ Sometimes

3. In your own words, what is "breakthrough prayer" – and what is its purpose? *

4. As far as you are aware, is the breakthrough prayer regularly prayed when church members convene for classes, meetings, rehearsals, etc.? *

◯ Yes ◯ Sometimes ◯ No

If yes or sometimes, list here any church gatherings, etc. where you believe it is regularly prayed:

5a. Has the congregation, or individual church members who attend meetings, choir rehearsals, classes, and groups, been invited to share personal and congregational breakthroughs and answers to prayer? *

◯ Yes ◯ No

5b. What examples of specific breakthrough in answers to prayer have been mentioned that you've heard, or have shared yourself?

5c. After a prayer breakthrough has been shared, has the church taken any new step forward that you remember? *

◯ Yes ◯ No

If yes-what was it? What happened after that?

6a. In general, what is your sense of how widely the breakthrough prayer has been incorporated throughout the congregation? *

◯ 1 Limited ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯ 5 Extensively

6b. If limited, what reasons may have contributed to this? Place your comments here:

7. The children of our church have been included in our breakthrough prayer initiative. *

◯ 1 Limited ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯ 5 Extensively

◯ Don't know/not sure

8. The youth (teens) of our church have been included in our breakthrough prayer initiative. *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively
○ Don't know/not sure

9a. I believe that the addition of the breakthrough prayer has deepened our congregation's focus together on prayer, and looking to God for divine guidance forward. *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively

9b. I believe we have gained all-congregation prayer momentum together through the addition of our breakthrough prayer our church has been praying. *

○ 1 Limited ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively

Describe your observations in more detail here, if you wish:

10a. Has there been resistance or pushback to the addition of breakthrough prayer in any ministry area or age group of your congregation? *

○ Yes ○ No

If yes, describe here:

10b. If yes, how was it addressed—if it was? Share here:

11. Overall, to what extent has the addition of "breakthrough prayer" seemed to inspire the church to look to God for guidance through the increased prayer focus? *

○ 1 Not at all ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Extensively

PART 2: "BREAKTHROUGH PRAYER INITIATIVE" POST-TRAINING: YOUR PERSONAL IMPLEMENTATION

"Breakthrough Prayer Initiative" Post-Training: Your Personal Implementation (this part features questions and reflections about how the Breakthrough Prayer Initiative has impacted your own personal prayer life)

12a. In the ministry area(s) you participate in at the church, what (if any) has been the use of the church's breakthrough prayer? Describe here: *

12b.
To what degree have you felt inspired, motivated or renewed through the addition of breakthrough prayer in your own prayer life? *

◯ 1 Limited ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯ 5 Extensively

12c. How often do you personally pray your church's breakthrough prayer? *

- ◯ Not at all
- ◯ Occasionally
- ◯ When the congregation is praying it together
- ◯ Daily
- ◯ More than once each day
- ◯ Other

If other, please describe:

13. I believe that the addition of the breakthrough prayer in my own prayer life has deepened and grown my own discernment of God's guidance, breakthroughs and next steps for me personally. *

○1 Limited ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 Extensively

Explain your response in more detail, including any breakthroughs or new guidance you've personally received in response to praying the breakthrough prayer--as you feel led to do so:

14. I have personally sensed or observed God's guidance forward for our church since we launched the breakthrough prayer, asking God for next steps and new possibilities. *

○1 Limited ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 Extensively

Share any specific examples of God's guidance forward FOR THE CONGREGATION you've noticed since the church has been praying the breakthrough prayer together, as applicable:

15a. BEFORE the church's breakthrough prayer was introduced to your congregation to pray together, to what degree did YOU PERSONALLY believe that prayer makes a difference? *

○1 Limited ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 Extensively

15b. AFTER adding the breakthrough prayer to your own prayer life, to what degree do you NOW personally believe that prayer makes a difference? *

○1 Limited ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5 Extensively

Thank you for completing this confidential survey for the Breakthrough Prayer Initiative case study! If you are satisfied with your responses, please "submit" to complete it.

Submit

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

United Theological Seminary
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Investigator Name:
Sue Nilson Kibbey
Contact Information:
snkibbey@united.edu
Cell: **937.524.6199**

Introduction: I am a doctoral student at United Theological Seminary.

Purpose: As part of my doctoral degree work, I am conducting a case study on "Equipping Pastors and Church Leaders to Launch Congregation-Wide Prayer Seeking God's New Possibilities [Breakthrough Prayer]."

Requirements for Participation:
You are invited because:

1. you attend Knightstown United Methodist Church in Knightstown, Indiana.
2. you attended a Breakthrough Prayer Initiative training event I led, and then partnered with your pastor/other church leaders to implement your learnings across the congregation.
3. you are available and willing to participate in both aspects of the case study including:
   - **Completion of an online questionnaire** about several aspects of the training, and your experiences and observations implementing it at your church
   - An **individual Zoom interview with me**, during which I'll ask questions that will allow you to share more subjectively about these plus about your own prayer experiences, prayer growth or prayer challenges following the training.

Procedures:
If you agree to participate in the 7-week case study, you will be asked to:

- Complete an individual online questionnaire that will include both questions for which you may reply by choosing a number (1-5), and also questions that ask for spontaneous responses—within a two-week time period from when you receive it at your email address, likely during the last two weeks of January 2024.
- Schedule an individual Zoom interview with me during the first 2-3 weeks of February 2024, and participate in an interactive one-hour (recorded) Zoom interview about your attendance and learnings at the prayer for new possibilities training; your experiences helping implement this breakthrough prayer practice in the congregation; and your own personal prayer experiences after the training.

  An online congregation-wide survey will be provided to the pastor, to be sent out as an opportunity for additional church members to give feedback about the incorporation of the breakthrough prayer component in their own prayer lives, and in church life—and what responses from God they may have observed or experienced.

The pastor's signature *on this consent form indicates permission for the congregation to receive and be invited to complete the online survey.*

Human Subject participation:
All participants must have consented to be in the study, and participants must be protected and treated fairly throughout the study. For women who are pregnant or may become pregnant during the study, they must provide a doctor's note for their safety, since they are considered a protected class (i.e., vulnerable population) by the Federal Law.

Risks:
I am required to point out potential risks to participants in this case study. Potential immediate or long-term risks or inconvenience to pastor, study participants or congregational members participating in this case study might include:

The suggestion to (or actually praying for) "God's new and next," "new miraculous possibilities and open doors," and/or "God's divine guidance forward" might trigger fear, anxiety and panic in some. In the training I offered, I emphasized God's goodness, kindness, love and care as God responds to our prayers. I also emphasized and explained God's loving kindness that protects us, holds us close and is always at work with our best interest at heart. Should this type of additive prayer still have triggered panic or anxiety for anyone participating in this case study, I will invite mitigation and spiritual care to be provided by a trained spiritual director who can come alongside the individual or the congregation to navigate through this.

The commitments of case study participants during duration of the seven-week study may be an inconvenience to study participants or provide a new spiritual challenge to reflect and articulate more deeply about one's personal prayer life.

Benefits:
Expected benefits of this study for individuals and the congregation as a whole are:

That individuals and the congregation collectively will recognize that they have indeed added an outward-focused ongoing daily prayer practice asking for God's new possibilities and divine guidance forward to their spiritual disciplines.

That individuals and the congregation collectively have been able to likewise develop outward-focused daily prayer observance to notice and name God's prayer responses, guidance, new "open doors" and breakthroughs.

That individuals have grown in their level of agreement that "breakthrough prayer asking for God's divine guidance and new possibilities makes a difference."

That individuals and the congregations have, through the additive daily practice of prayer asking for God's new possibilities, experienced a shift of spiritual atmosphere (both personally and collectively) to hope and expectation for God's future.

Voluntariness:
Participation is voluntary and you may skip any questions in the individual questionnaire or your Zoom interview you do not wish to answer. You can also stop participating at any time. Your decision to participate will have no impact on participating in or helping lead your church's prayer ministry. If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the case study, please contact me directly in person, on the

phone, or electronic communication. My contact information is at the top of this consent form. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time.

Confidentiality:
We will be careful to keep your information confidential, and we will ask you and all the case study group participants to keep your individual interview discussion with me confidential as well. There is always a small risk of unwanted or accidental disclosure. The Zoom individual interviews will be recorded and transcribed only with your permission (signing this form). Any notes, recordings, or transcriptions will be kept private. I will be the only one with access to your information. The files will be encrypted, and password protected. You can decide whether you want your name used.

A research assistant will help me set up the secure questionnaires online. A transcriptionist may assist me with transcribing the Zoom interviews. At no point will either of these have access to association of names or identities with questionnaires or Zoom interviews.

Summary:
If you have any questions about the research study, please contact me.

Signature:
Signing this paper means that you have read this, or had it read to you, and that you want to participate in the case study. If you do not want to participate in the case study, do not sign the paper. Being in the case study is up to you, and no one will be angry if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Signature of Person Agreeing to Participate in the Project/Study	Date Signed

APPENDIX F

KNIGHTSTOWN CHURCH: BREAKTHROUGH PRAYER CARD FOR ADULTS AND CARD FOR CHILDREN

God of power,
Surround us
with Your love and grace.
Show us
where breakthroughs
are needed.
Unite us
as we follow You.
Amen
God of power,
Surround us.
Show us.
Unite us.
Amen
Knightstown United Methodist Church

APPENDIX G

PHOTO OF KNIGHTSTOWN CHURCH SANCTUARY PRAYER CROSS

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